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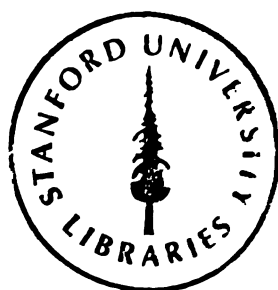
THE BAILEY TWINS

ANNA C. CHAMBERLAIN



THIS BOOK
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Rosamond H. Peirce



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THE BAILEY TWINS
And the Rest of the Family





THEY WERE INSPIRED TO BEGIN THE LONG-TALKED-OF LETTERS
TO ALINE.—Page 154.

THE BAILEY TWINS

AND

THE REST OF THE FAMILY

BY

ANNA C. CHAMBERLAIN

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ILLUSTRATED BY ELIZABETH OTIS DUNN



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THE BAILEY TWINS

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THE BAILEY TWINS

AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY

CHAPTER I

CONCERNING THEIR NEW HATS

THE Bailey home on the Kirksville road was in a whirl of preparations.

There was no question about the whirl, as the sounds proceeding from the house testified; but if any one had had the curiosity to enter and investigate, he would have found that the cyclone centered in the room where the toilet of the twins was in progress. Mr. Bailey was away, as usual, on his missionary duties; Herbert, the oldest of the family, Willis, the bookworm, and Edgar, the baby, had no part in the proceedings; but the rest

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of the family labored in the cyclone district.

In the large south chamber at the head of the stairs Aline, nineteen years old, was pinning her collar with silent decorum. Eleanor, aged twelve, slender and sedate, her conduct a living testimonial to her admiration for her elder sister, followed this and other details of personal decoration with equal propriety. Farther along the hall, in the middle-sized bedroom over the front door, two boys,—Fred, aged seventeen, and Aleck, fourteen,—were likewise engaged in the mysteries of the toilet in solemn stillness. Fred passed the razor soundlessly over his fuzzy cheeks, while Aleck wrestled with the buttonholes of his unaccustomed collar in voiceless misery.

But two paces from the turn of the banister, things were quite different. From the closed door of the north room

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issued the cries and exclamations of those not used to "suffer in silence."

"Now, Ma, not so tight!"

"Ouch, you're pulling!"

"O-o-oh, I got soap in my eyes! Where's the towel?"

The Bailey twins, aged seven, were being prepared for a trip to town, and they beguiled the process of dressing, as they did every other action, with outcries, comments, and arguments. The reason for their turbulence was the continual vortex of their own excitement, in which they lived and breathed. In the midst of the tumult of sound their mother, a gentle, kindly woman, usually speechless, since she seldom found opportunity for a word, was patiently combing, braiding, buttoning, and tying.

"Now I'm all right," declared Nell, examining herself in the mirror, when her stubby black braids were firmly tied.

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"But I'm so smooth. If I only had some curls!"

According to her custom, Eliza appropriated this idea.

"Ma," she said politely, "won't you make me some curls? Right across here," indicating the slippery smoothness of her front hair.

"Now, Ma, may she? I wanted them first!" cried Nell excitedly. "Let me have them!"

"But I asked first," persisted Eliza, with the deliberate calmness with which either twin could lash the other to madness.

"I guess there will be time for two curlings," replied Mrs. Bailey; and in the thrill of this new excitement silence reigned for a brief moment.

"If I only had a fan now!" exclaimed Nell, when she emerged, red and perspiring, from the process of being curled.

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Again Eliza, less inventive, took advantage of the idea.

"Oh, Sister, Sister!" she cried, speeding down the hall, "mayn't I carry your fan?"

"Oh, let me!" shrieked Nell, trotting at Eliza's heels, "I said first. Let me!"

"You mayn't either of you have it," said Aline coldly from before her mirror, where she was adjusting her hat. "And if you can't be quiet, I'll ask Mother to keep you both at home."

Awed at the thought, the twins stole back to have their shabby last year's hats put on their heads and made fast by means of a rubber band passed under their braids, and then, hearing the sound of the surrey being driven to the entrance, they flew down to the front door. Any one seeing the wild rush with which they emerged from the house, would have understood why their father had insisted that only the old plow horses should be

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used in taking the children to town, and that Fred, the calmest and most patient of the boys, should be the driver.

Herbert had brought the surrey around, and was now tying the horses.

"Don't you children go to clambering into the buggy now," he said, when he had made the pair safe and fast.

"Why, Herbert!" explained Nell, round-eyed and important, "we have to get in. Don't you see? We just got to have new hats, you know; our old ones are so—so—"

"Well, you keep out of the surrey till Fred comes," repeated Herbert firmly, "or your new hats may have to wait. See?"

And leaving things in this dark and horrible uncertainty, he went back to his day's work. The possibilities were too dreadful to be tampered with, so the twins gave up their plan of choosing their seats

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and being all arranged when their elders appeared; and mindful of freshly starched dresses, stood gingerly on the door-step.

"I think an empty buggy looks so kind of lonesome, don't you?" said Nell, eyeing the vehicle wistfully.

Eliza did think so, but it was against her principles to agree with her twin; so she merely pursed her lips like Miss Ramsay, their dressmaker, and tried to think of some contrary sentiment.

"I mean to ride in front," went on Nell, who never could learn by experience. "As soon as Fred comes, I'm going to ask him. Ma-a-a, don't let her! 'Tisn't fair!"

For Eliza, the plagiarist, quick to act, if slow to think, was already half-way up the stairs.

"Fred, Fred," she cried, "may I sit on the front seat with you?"

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At the same time Nell, a close second, was wailing, "'Tisn't fair! I said first. Let me."

"You can't either of you sit there," said Fred, emerging from his room, somewhat flushed with his decorative efforts, but none the less resplendent, with his smooth, shiny cheeks and his gorgeous pink tie. "Think I can drive with a hyena or a catamount up beside me? Eleanor is coming with me, and you've got to divide up between Aleck and Aline; and if I hear so much as a squawk out of either one of you, I'll drop you down Big Hollow."

Too much amazed for speech or protest, the twins dropped back, hardly recognizing Fred, their most sympathetic and good-natured brother, in this severe and autocratic young man. For Fred, more than all the rest, had seemed to understand that at the bottom of their honest little hearts the twins did not mean to be

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naughty or disorderly or quarrelsome. Things had to be explained, however, and if you had always the fear of interruption before you, wouldn't *you* talk fast and eagerly?

Fred had a theory that the noisy and superabundant energy of his small sisters could be disposed of by suitable exercise, and that the problem was only to find enterprises of sufficient magnitude which at the same time were safe undertakings. The time he set them to knocking down the plaster in the old tenant's house and dragging up little carts of sand for the new plaster, was well remembered as the most peaceful fortnight the family had known for years; and Mrs. Bailey was only too willing to condone the extra grime to be removed at night for the sake of her peace of mind by day. And here was Fred saying "sha'n't" like Herbert or Aline! The worst of it was that Fred

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did as he said, and if Fred said he'd leave them at "Big Hollow," he certainly would.

For this reason it was a very meek pair of children who submitted to being "divided up" between Aline and Aleck on the back and middle seats. They were arranged, too, in such a way that they were not even directly opposite each other, so the mere consolation of making faces, pulling down their eyelids, pursing their lips, or thrusting out their tongues,—a popular means of enlivening dull moments,—was denied them. They could only talk, and that across two unsympathetic elders, who were likely to interrupt at any critical moment.

But at last they were on their way, that was something. And even if the wind blowing on the back of Eliza's neck did tickle her a good deal, it blew her curls for-

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ward, so that they showed a good deal more than Nell's, "which is a blessing," Eliza thought, as she sat with her head sideways after the manner of Miss Cates, their Sunday-school teacher, giving herself a smug and self-satisfied air particularly irritating to her twin.

Nell was not looking for trouble, however. Her thoughts were on the new hats, and every flower by the wayside, each changing tint in earth or sky, suggested only a new variety of coloring and adornment for her prospective head-gear.

"My hat's going to be kind of purply," she began at last, when her surging thoughts threatened explosion if denied utterance any longer.

Eliza smiled a three-cornered smile, fearful to contemplate. The twins were fond of impersonating people by imitating small peculiarities of speech and manner, and Eliza's present effort was an airy at-

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tempt to be Miss Porter, their teacher, who raised her upper lip to one side in smiling.

"I don't think purple is any color at all," she said, laying one hand across the other elegantly, after the manner of the minister's wife.

"I did not mean just purple," said Nell, hastening to correct a false impression, "I just meant a kind of purply-pink."

She was trying to describe lilac, Aline's favorite color, which Nell very much admired. But Eliza preferred to differ.

"Maybe I'll have blue," she said, casting up her eyes, "not just common sky-blue, but a real, un-u-su-al greeny-blue with a kind of a yellowy look."

"Humph! How would that look!" sniffed Nell. "It wouldn't have any look at all."

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"Not with violets mixed with roses?" persisted Eliza. "I mean to have Aline get all the roses in the store for my hat."

"You sha'n't do that," exclaimed Nell in alarm, "'cause I'd want some."

"You couldn't have any," said Eliza, rejoiced to have found a vulnerable spot. "Aline would give them all to me."

"You wouldn't, would you, Aline?" begged Nell. "You'll let me have roses for my new hat? Eliza isn't to have all, is she? Ali-i-n-n-ne!"

Now Aline's head ached this morning, and, moreover, she had her own private worry and dread. It was now three weeks since she had taken an examination for a teacher's certificate and had applied for a position in the Emporia schools. Since then she had heard nothing; and she was wondering if she would see Superintendent Rogers this morning, and what he

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would have to tell her. Beside this real trouble, small matters like hats and roses seemed trivial.

"Oh, do stop fussing, children!" she answered wearily. "I don't know anything about your hats. We'll leave all that to the milliner. Perhaps she will think your old ones are good enough to make over, so that we'll not need new ones."

No new hats! The twins looked at each other in horror and dismay. No new hats! And the sun still shone, and the birds sang while this dreadful possibility, this sword of Damocles, was hanging over their heads! Nell's lip began to quiver, and her eyes filled. With Nell these signs portended trouble, and it was well to make explanations or to change the subject, and so avert the coming storm. But her elders were occupied with their own thoughts or observations, and the cup of the child's woe filled fuller

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and fuller. No new hats! No "purply-pink" ribbons! No roses! And the cup overflowed in a wild torrent of grief.

"I-I wa-a-ant a ne-e-ew-w ha-a-at!" she wailed vociferously:

"Gracious, child! What is the matter?" said Aline, called out of her troubled thoughts, and the team came to a sudden halt.

"Whom did I hear asking to be sent home?" asked Fred in a voice of deadly calm, as he turned to look back.

Silence reigned. Aline and Eliza were looking accusingly at a tearful little girl, flushed with the tremendous effort of holding back her grief. But Aleck, who seemed to know by instinct when not to notice a person, looked at the birds in the hedge, the flowers by the road side, and the corn in the fields.

"F-false alarm," he said slowly.

Aleck had a little halt in his speech

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which made him speak deliberately. Perhaps it accounted for the fact that he so seldom told on a person.

"I'm glad of that," said Fred, taking up the lines again, and after a moment of painful indecision the old horses jogged on.

In her first tragic recoil against the thought of keeping her old hat, Nell had snatched it off her head, and it now lay in her lap, battered and homely. After she had swallowed her tears and the others had turned their attention elsewhere, her eyes again sought the forlornness of her hat. As she looked away again to keep back the tears, she met Aleck's gaze, quizzical and sympathetic.

"L-looks like that t-toy d-dog of yours after I s-sat on it. R-remember how you b-bawled?" he remarked.

Nell remembered. It was a sore memory with her yet. Then Aleck went on

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studying the roadside, and Nell—yielded to temptation.

“What in the world are you wriggling around so for, child?” asked Aline fretfully, for her headache was growing worse. Nell quickly settled into quiet, and Eliza looked at her critically.

“You’ll be all black if you don’t wear a hat,” she said severely, “and your hair will be all uncurled. *I* want to be nice when I get there.”

But Nell could not be stirred to strife. She fidgeted a good deal, which was not to be wondered at, since the drive was long; but she did not talk, and when they turned down the street towards Aunt Cynthia’s, where they always stopped on a trip to town, she put on her hat with a meekness which made Aline look at her sharply.

“You’re not sick, are you, Nell?” she asked anxiously, adding, “Mercy, how

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your hat does look! I did not realize what a mop it was."

And Aleck, turning his eyes that way, gave a sudden, unaccountable snort.

"'Tisn't polite," said Eliza, primly, who seemed at times to feel responsible for all the manners in her vicinity, "to laugh at any one's hat, even if she does look a perfect fright."

Aunt Cynthia welcomed them with open arms, and was undecided whether to speed them on their way to the milliner's, or to urge them to stop to an early dinner first. But finding that they must return home that evening, she advised that they do their down-town errands promptly, and then return to her for a late dinner and a rest before the homeward journey.

Aline would not soon forget the ordeal at the milliner's. When Nell realized that Eliza had pink rosebuds and she had

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none, even her entirely new hat in its bravery of blue ribbon bows and streamers, could hardly console her; and when Eliza found that the wreath of pink rosebuds and Nile-green ribbons were to go on her old hat, which must first be made over, she could scarcely be dragged from the store. And when it was further impressed upon her that in the meantime she must wear a borrowed hat, perhaps Nell's old one, Aline recognized a coming storm.

"Hush! hush! Not a sound," she commanded desperately, gripping the child's arm with a firmness which astonished them both.

And just then, looking up, she saw Superintendent Rogers, who lifted his hat, gazing at her quite intently. The surrey was waiting, for which she was thankful, and Fred helped hustle the twins into their places in spite of their

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voluble attempts at explanation and protest, and, bareheaded, with the millinery—old and new—in parcels at their feet, they hurried back to Aunt Cynthia's.

Aunt Cynthia was always their haven of refuge in town. She had welcome and house-room for as many as the big surrey could carry, and speeded them on their journey homeward only when she could persuade them to stay no longer. To-day, in answer to her urgent invitation for them all to stay for the May Festival which was going to be held in Uncle Hal's grove the next day, it was decided that Nell, having the new hat, was the only one who could stay. The rest of the hats might be finished to-morrow, but they could not be sure. At any rate, they would be sent up to Aunt Cynthia's when ready, to be called for by the first one coming from the farm.

They thought every one but Nell had

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better go home, since they were expected, but it was a rather downhearted company that made ready for the start. Aline was depressed about the encounter with Mr. Rogers, to whom she had had no chance to speak. To be seen reprimanding and almost shaking her little sister on the street! What kind of a teacher would he think she would make! Eleanor and Eliza had their hat troubles, worse now than ever, for to-day each had to wear a borrowed one. Eleanor was too loyal to her admired elder sister to grumble at wearing Aline's old hat, but Eliza was frantic in her rebellion against Nell's shabby finery.

"I wa-a-ant my new hat! I want my ne-e-ew hat!" she shrieked, as Nell's old one was thrust on her resisting head, and ceased her screams only for sheer lack of breath as they drove away.

Aleck was somewhat dejected, for he

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had spent his hard-earned dollar in a manner not wholly satisfactory to himself, having bought a necktie, two pairs of socks, and an ivory toothpick which, if held between the teeth, so the salesman assured him, would be of great help in overcoming his peculiarity of speech. It did help a little, he was glad to find; but it did seem as if a dollar ought to have gone farther. Still Aleck was not one who brooded, and he brightened at the thought that there were other dollars in the world, and he would in time, doubtless, earn one of them.

Fred's trouble lay deeper, for he, as his new razor and pink necktie testified, had met the "one girl"; and to-day he had seen her in White's new automobile, while he was driving old horses that hadn't spirit even to prick up their ears as the machine passed.

"Darn it!" was his desperate thought.

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“Why couldn’t Herbert have driven the plugs, or else the children act decent, so a man could handle the colts?”

With such a load of trouble, it was no wonder that the surrey creaked and groaned as it started down the curved drive leading from Aunt Cynthia’s door to the street. When their heads were turned toward home, however, the “plugs” set out on a very respectable trot in spite of their load. Just below, where the curve of the drive swept into the main road, was White’s automobile.

Fred took out his whip in a determined way, resolved that if his team could not wake up a little on such an occasion, he’d try to learn what a little “hickory oil” would do. They were just rounding the curve down to the street. This lay several feet lower than the level of the yard, and the drive, sloping downward with a gentle grade, was bordered with high

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banks, rounded with a sharp curve in each direction. Just here Fred touched his horses with the whip to accelerate their speed and spirit as they whirled into the street. As he did so, Eliza glanced back at Nell watching them from the piazza, and the full sense of her own wrongs came upon her afresh.

"I want my new ha-a-a-at! I want my ne-e-e-ew hat!" she squalled, just as the team sped round the curve.

Fred gave one desperate backward glance.

"Can't you shut that young one up?" he muttered.

That moment's inattention was fatal. The horses swerved ever so slightly, the wheels ran up along the bank, and the surrey tipped—tipped—and went over, spilling its helpless occupants into the street.

Fred never loosened his hold on the

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lines, but sprang quickly forward, and with Aleck's help, began to unhitch the frightened horses while the automobile, stopping promptly, sent its load also to the rescue. Aline lay where she had fallen, slightly stunned; but as they lifted her, she roused enough to ask if the children were safe. Eleanor had got up of herself, nursing a bruised shoulder, and followed her sister into the automobile with a certain shy pleasure in the new experience.

Only Eliza lay still on the grass sobbing bitterly.

"Poor little one!" said Ellen Ritchie, Fred's "one girl." "Pick her up gently, Mr. Fred," for the horses were now safely tied. "See how she cries! Where does it hurt, darling?"

And Eliza, having recovered the breath jarred out of her by the fall, took up her plaint just where she had laid it down:

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"I want my new ha-a-a-at! I want my ne-e-e-ew hat!"

After the overturned surrey had been righted and drawn out of the way, White's automobile sped up to Aunt Cynthia's door with the victims of the accident, where they were comforted, rubbed with liniment, or made to rest, according to their hurts. Fred and Aleck took their rig to the blacksmith's to have its slight injuries repaired, and they all agreed to accept Aunt Cynthia's cordially renewed invitation to remain and attend the May party, sending word of their intention by White's people.

"Only I ought to have had a new hat," murmured Eliza, still aggrieved in spite of the fortunate way things had come out.

"Then you should have sat on the old one," said Aleck, biting hard on the tooth-pick.

A little guilty flush crept into Nell's

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cheek, and Aline exclaimed reproachfully,

"You didn't, did you, Nell?"

"It was a accident," began Nell quickly, adding honestly, "Just at first it was. Then when I found the old thing had got under me, I just let it stay."

"Anyhow you won't have pink rosebuds," said Eliza virtuously. "Badness always punishes us. That's why I am good."

The May party which they attended the next day was all they had anticipated, and was the means of dispelling many worries. Mr. Rogers was there, and greeting Aline warmly, announced that her application for the new room had been accepted.

"When I saw the excellent control you had over your own little sisters," he concluded, smiling, "I knew you were just the one for the place."

Fred's "one girl" was there, and as they

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ate a dish of ice-cream together, she complimented Fred on being such a safe and careful driver, and "so good to your little sisters, who are so funny and bright. Already they seem to know their own minds, Mr. Fred."

"They certainly do," agreed Fred, thinking of the new hats.

As for Aleck, he regretted more than ever the limited capacity of a dollar, when he priced the ice-cream and learned that it was ten cents a dish. But just then Aunt Cynthia said: "My treat!" And after that Mr. Rogers invited Miss Aline and her family to have some. Then Uncle Hal said, "Have one on me, boy," and just before they left Fred said, "Come on, Aleck, I've just enough for two more," and after that he did not see what he could do with a dollar if he had one.

And then they went home; all the girls in fresh hats, which had come in time for

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the party. The rose-wreathed ones were so much the prettier that Nell regretted more than ever her impatience and trickery.

"I think it is much nicer for twins to be alike," she said pointedly to Eleanor, whose hat was rose-wreathed, too; but Aline would not hear of an exchange.

"You wanted a new hat badly enough to scheme for it, Nell," she said. "Now be contented, for it is very pretty."

And laden only with light hearts, the surrey rolled smoothly on its homeward way. But conversation languished, for the elders were each absorbed in new and pleasant plans, and the twins were too full of ice-cream and excitement for fluent utterance. Nell, the turbulent, looked at the red of the approaching sunset, trilling softly to herself with sweet discordance, while Eliza leaned back peacefully, the burden of other people's wrong-doings al-

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most slipping from her slender shoulders.

"Looks like 'golden gates' and 'pearly streets' and 'River Jordan,'" crooned Nell, her eyes fixed on a luminous bank of clouds.

"That's wicked," said Eliza severely, "to talk of Bible and Sunday things right out loud in your every-day voice. You ought to say them soft and silky, like this," and Eliza emitted a sound strangely like the cry of a sick kitten.

"That's not a commandment," said Nell, with sleepy crossness, "an' nenny way I don't care."

"Why, Nell Bailey!" exclaimed Eliza in round-eyed horror, "saying 'don't care' 'bout things like that, is like a nin-fiddle and a-publican and a-sinner."

"Who's saying Bible words in bad tones now?" demanded Nell, turning the tables with unexpected adroitness.

But Eliza scorned a reply. Instead

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she assumed Miss Ramsay's puckered lips, Miss Cates' smug, tilted poise of the head, and casting up her eyes like Dr. Smith, she piously crossed her hands like his wife. There had been times when this combination had reduced her twin to frantic tears of fury. But Nell was not looking. Instead she leaned against Aline's inviting shoulder, and her lids drooped sleepily. Her heavy head sank lower and lower, until it was gently slipped down upon the silken smoothness of elder sister's lap.

"Seems like as if I had somebody soft 'side of me, I could go to sleep, too," said Eliza enviously, casting aside her grown-up poses, and remembering only that she was a very sleepy little girl.

"How would this do?" suggested Aleck, folding the carriage robe across his knees and relieving its fuzziness with his best silk handkerchief.

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"'Tisn't very soft," said Eliza critically, as she rested her head on it. Then the whirling wheels buzzed a lullaby, and the springs rocked gently. "But it's pretty nice," she added drowsily, and Eliza had joined her twin in dream-land.

CHAPTER II

A MATTER OF DISCIPLINE

“**W**HAT is the meaning of this unusual peace and quietness?” demanded Willis, when being relieved from the labors of the farm by a prolonged rain, he sought the society of a beloved book.

Aline looked up from a confusion of small white garments on which she was sewing buttons, strings, and patches, according to their varying needs and degrees of dilapidation.

“The twins have been so much quieter the last few days,” she answered, “I’m almost afraid they are sick.”

“Now, Ma-a, must she? ’Tisn’t fair!” wailed Nell’s voice from the veranda, where the twins, driven by the rain from

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the sand pile, the pebbly stream, and their beautiful moss houses, were giving a tea-party on the wash-bench, their whole dolls—numbering but two—appearing as guests at the festive board, the maimed ones peacefully asleep in their cradle.

At this outburst Aline and Willis looked out to see Eliza, somewhat flushed with the effort, rapidly devouring the tiny biscuits, the little crackers, and the small round cookies, which Nell, by means of much coaxing and many promises, had procured for this festivity.

“How can I be Jim Ellis come to supper, ’less I eat fast like he does?” demanded Eliza, with an air of injured innocence.

Nell was in no way appeased by this explanation.

“’Tenny rate you sha’n’t have any more,” she said, gathering up the slender remains of the feast, “and I’ll tell Ma



THEIR WHOLE DOLLS, NUMBERING BUT TWO, APPEARING AS GUESTS
AT THE FESTAL BOARD.—*Page 42.*



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how greedy you were and spoiled the party."

"Do, and I'll 'splain how umpolite you were, snatching things away from your visitors," returned Eliza.

Nell hesitated. Explanations were so difficult. She could never retain the Miss Ramsay pose for long, nor even the pious hand-clasping of the minister's wife. Before she knew it, she was talking loud and fast, and Mother was saying, "Now, Nell, you are too much excited. Let Eliza explain." And Eliza's calm, proper explanation had always made things seem so different from the way they had looked at first.

"If I d'vide things *so*, will you tell?" asked Nell, portioning out the small remaining morsels with numerical precision.

Eliza considered, quick to recognize her advantage.

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"And give you this much?" continued Nell, breaking the one beloved sugar cooky so that about two-thirds fell to Eliza's share.

"Not if you d'vide that way, I won't," surrendered Eliza amiably, "and I won't be Jim Ellis any more. I'll be Mis' Smith," crossing her hands primly for a moment, "an' you can be Ma. Why, how do you do, Mis' Bailey? And how are the twins? Such nice little girls! Especially the one that sits outside and rolls up her eyes so pretty when she sings. Seems to me she looks a little pale, Mis' Bailey, I hope the other one—the one that screams so loud and goes to sleep in the sermon—I hope she hasn't been teasing such a good little girl."

"'Tisn't so," said Nell, very red in the face; "Mis' Smith wouldn't talk evil speaking, lying, and slandering like that."

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Eliza, having freed her mind, was content for the moment to overlook this use of "Bible words" at a party.

"Have you seen Mr. Man lately?" she asked, making an adroit change to a rhyming game of their own invention, "or Mr. Fan, or Mr. Dan, or Mr. Ban, or Mr. Pan, or Mr. Ran?"

"No," said Nell glibly, her troubles forgotten, "but I saw Mr. Ten and Mr. Wen and Mr. Fen and Mr. Hen and Mr. Den."

"Mr. Tall came to our house yesterday," continued Eliza, "and brought Mr. Hall and Mr. Ball and Mr. Fall and Mr. Wall."

"So did Mr. Mell come to our house," went on Nell, taking her turn promptly, "and Mr. Well and Mr. Fell and Mr. Dell and Mr. Sell and Mr. Tell and Mr. Hell—"

"Why, Nell Bailey!" reproved Eliza,

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with such a start of horror that she knocked Nell's best doll off its chair and set the dog to barking. "Don't you know it's a sin to say that word anywhere but in church?"

"No, I don't," said Nell crossly, startled by the sudden attack, "an' nenny way you've bumped Jemina's head, and waked up all the others. I should think, being a doll mother yourself, you'd know better'n that;" and although Eliza now represented both Dr. and Mrs. Smith with a touch of Miss Ramsay to strengthen the effect, Nell was too busy with her crying dolls to notice.

"I believe," said Aline, turning to Willis with silent laughter, "that Eliza will be a genuine idealist when she grows up."

"It isn't her present tendency to idealism that worries me," said Willis, the practical, "so much as the question of who's going to spank it out of her."

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"Why is that necessary?" asked Aline, biting off a thread.

"Because," said Willis, who was a thinker, "of all people, your idealist is the most selfish. All his energy and effort are spent in trimming himself to a certain pattern, without a thought of what is to become of the rest of the world."

Aline was inclined to question this utter condemnation of a trait she much admired, and in the interest of their argument they did not notice that Eliza, who did not care much for dolls, had left Nell to rock her children back to sleep, and had stationed herself behind them with a book.

The argument ceased, unsettled, and Willis, intent on his volume, was called from the thrall of its pages by a small voice.

"Please, Willis, will you 'splain to me

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what is S-p-o-n-t-a-n-e-o-u-s-C-o-m-b-u-s-t-i-o-n?"

"Wha-a-t!" exclaimed Willis, looking up in amazement. "What does the child mean?"

"It's in this book," said Eliza meekly.

Somehow she felt that her poses would not work with straightforward Willis. He took the volume somewhat impatiently, and found that his small sister was deep in the gruesome ending of Krook, the rum-soaked miser in "Bleak House." With an exclamation he returned the book to its place on the shelf.

"Hereafter, youngster," he said decisively, "you leave grown-up books alone and stick to your Mother Goose."

"Mother Goose!" exclaimed Eliza scornfully. "I haven't read her for years and years and ye-e-e-ears."

"Oh, 'Liza!" exclaimed Nell, hearing a familiar and well-beloved name, "let's do

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play Mother Goose. The sun is shining now, and the puppy would make a beautiful pig, if you pinched his tail, and we could have 'Tom the Piper's son' just as easy."

Grown-up books were quickly forgotten with this alluring prospect beckoning. Hasty preparations went forward in the hall, and then a wild posse whirled down the drive,—Nell, as Tom, with the pseudo pig barking wildly under her arm, the old dog and Eliza noisily pursuing.

"I think," said Willis drily, as the noise died away in the distance, "if quiet and decorum are the dangerous symptoms, we'll have our little twins with us for some time to come."

Aline was unusually busy this summer, as her mother was at all times; and Willis's jest served to stop her from worrying about the health of her small sisters. She noted that although they

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seemed to choose quieter games, they disputed over them even more noisily than ever.

One night, however, things came to a crisis. After superintending a bed-time hour of more than usual uproariousness, Mrs. Bailey came downstairs looking spent and worried.

"What in the world is the matter, Mother?" asked Aline, as the usual series of benedictions—"Good-night," "Sweet repose," "Half the bed," "An' all the clothes,"—did not float down after her.

Instead came a sound of subdued wails.

"I hardly know," said Mrs. Bailey, looking about vaguely, as if to read the answer to her perplexity on chair or table. "Nell is screaming for a blanket, and Eliza is crying because she is too warm to stand one."

"I'll warrant Eliza did not find she was too warm, till after Nell asked for the

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blanket," hazarded Willis drily, for he did not share Aline's veiled preference for the quieter twin.

"I don't know that she did. I can't remember," returned his mother, "but it is a warm evening. Nell can't take any harm for a little while, and I said I would come back in five minutes, and if she was still cold, I would cover her."

"I-I- wa-ant a bla-a-a-anket," wailed a voice from the top of the stairs, while another more distant screamed, "Ma-a, don't let her, I'm so-o wa-a-arm!"

"I'm-m so-o co-o-ld!" mourned the first voice, while the second moaned:

"I'm-m so wa-a-arm."

"Mercy! It sounds like a pair of ban-shees!" exclaimed Aline, springing to her feet. "Let me go, Mother; you're tired. I can quiet them."

Whatever energetic means Aline had meant to employ in quelling the riot of

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sound, she laid aside the plan at sight of little Nell, blue and shivering, at the head of the stairs. Plainly enough the child was having a real chill, and after a hasty consultation it was decided that she should be put in Eleanor's little white bed next to Aline, and that Eleanor should be put in with Eliza.

Used to being thus cast into the breach, the "middle sister" made no complaint, but merely remarked, "'Tisn't as bad as if I had to sleep between them," which it certainly was not.

But Eliza's warmth grew and grew and grew, until by morning she, too, was moved into a white bed in the South chamber, and the doctor, who had been sent for, decided that the twins were coming down with the measles.

"And they'll have them pretty hard, too, Mrs. Bailey, if I'm not mistaken," he said, looking down at the fever-flushed

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little faces. "They're both high-strung, nervous children, and it looks to me as if they had taken cold. Better get them into a warm room and be ready for some careful nursing."

With this end in view the two little beds were moved into the spare bedroom downstairs, and with Aline as chief nurse, the struggle with this sometimes troublesome disease was undertaken.

The week which followed was a long, long one to every one in the household. It was quiet enough for Willis to read his very deepest books at any time he chose, but what interest had they while from the closed door of that darkened room came constant moans of weariness and pain? Fred and Herbert could drive the colts whenever they wished, and lay down their tools as they wanted to without a thought of little meddling fingers, but they did not enjoy this liberty; and never did the colts

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have so little use, and never were tools so lightly prized. As for Eleanor and Aleck, the sometimes resentful "middle ones," who had often complained of the privileges they must yield to those younger, how gladly would they have given up these privileges and every other advantage just to hear the little teasing voices once again!

For the twins were very sick. Day and night little Eliza's restless head sought upon the pillow the ease it could not find, and she kept saying constantly,

"Oh, Mother! Oh, Sister Aline! I am so very tired!"

Meanwhile Nell, except for an occasional moan, lay silent and unconscious. But Aline watched by day, and Father and Mother by night, with unremitting care; the doctor was wise and skillful; and, above all, God was good; and when the disease had run its course, the little suf-

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ferers by slow degrees gathered strength to sit up and eat the dainty lunches that were lovingly prepared for them, and then they began to be themselves again.

"Oh, Nell, I was so tired, you just can't think!" said Eliza, when with their toys spread before them on the counterpane, they began to play once more.

"But I was worser," said Nell with proud distinction. "I was nun-conkshus."

"Humph!" said Eliza with Miss Porter's acid, three-cornered smile. "That's just not knowing anything. I wouldn't be so niggerant."

Nell was crushed but not subdued.

"Let's play 'Babes in the Woods,' " she said. "Our dolls will do for the children. We can have the bed-posts for the forest and Aline will pick us some evergreen for leaves, an' o-o-oh!" For just then Aleck came in to delight their eyes with the shiny

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sleekness of his tame gobbler. "There's the robin! Aleck, you will let him be our robin for 'Babes in the Woods,' won't you?"

And Aleck, unable to deny the little invalids, left the "robin," while Aline for the same reason, endured the presence of the preposterous fowl on the foot of the bed—since he quite refused to take any active part in the rescue of the "Babes"—where he sat and gobbled at intervals, until the increasing drowsiness of the little convalescents reconciled them to parting with this unusual room-mate.

As the same spirit of indulgence was shared by the rest of the household, it was not strange that when finally released from the limitations of their short convalescence, the small sisters felt that the world was theirs to command. It was with the sense of their new freedom strong upon them that they invaded the forbid-

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den precincts of the laundry, set out the clothes-pins in orderly array around the edge of their sand-pile for a circular hedge, and sank a tub in its center for a lake.

"This would make a lovely boat down at the stream," said Eliza, looking longingly at the big clothes-basket, "and the sticks could be oars."

"There wouldn't be time," objected Nell, as they heard the sound of the supper bell, "and to-morrow Mrs. Cloonan comes, and she won't let us."

"She'd have to, if Ma said so," returned Eliza firmly, "'cause we've been sick, and when children have had measles, they should have every single thing they want, else they might prolapse."

But the next day Mrs. Cloonan held widely differing views of the rights even of "measly" twins. She was the best and, in fact, the only efficient laundress in the

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vicinity, and as such she reigned queen of the wash-room, its environment, and all its appurtenances, on her appointed day. On that occasion the boys timed their trips to the cistern judiciously, and even Mrs. Bailey made any necessary excursions across the back porch at wide and considerate intervals.

When this autocrat, therefore, discovered that her precinct had been invaded and its furnishings pilfered, her outraged feelings can much better be imagined than described.

“Is ut by yer wush, mum,” she began with great dignity, appearing in the kitchen to Mrs. Bailey’s great surprise, “thot me clo-thes-pins wuz stook in the sa-and-poile fer finces, an’ me clo-thes basket be tuck to th’ shtrame fer a shtamer, to sa-ay nothin’ av the misuse ov me toob an’ me wash-h-shticks?”

“Why, no, Mrs. Cloonan,” said Mrs.

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Bailey, hastily wiping her hands and hurrying to the laundry, "I'll see about it right away."

"I've *saw*," affirmed Mrs. Cloonan, wiping out the misused clothes-basket, and turning a stern eye upon the twins, who, subdued and panting with zeal, appeared in the doorway with the missing clothes-pins and wash-sticks.

"Of course it's the twins. They've been sick, you know, and I'm afraid we've spoiled them," explained Mrs. Bailey, relieved that the missing articles had been restored.

"Well, since they've ma-ade ristitootion, we'll sa-ay no mo-ore," said Mrs. Cloonan, still bending a stern frown on the culprits, adding as they stole meekly away, "But if ye'll take ut fr-r-om me whut's washed ther clo-oths iver since they've wo-oer thim, it's mo-ore than measuls at's ailing yer twins. The manners uv 'em, I

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mane," as Mrs. Bailey looked up anxiously. "It's the new ways uv eddication an' the loike. Shuttin' oop childers alone wid ther sins is wan av thim. It's a noice, lady-loike poonishmint thot doosn't mooss th' aper-rn, ner shtir oop yer fal-in's, boot thot it's anny cure fer wr-rong doin', is a shnare an' a delooshun av th' Evil Wan who invinted ut, kno-owin' thot wan sin br-rooded over will hatch sivin wor-rse wans."

Mrs. Cloonan was now well embarked on the delayed tide of her day's work, and the thud of her hands on the board seemed to prevent reply, though it in no way stemmed the flow of her eloquence.

"'Short an' shwate' is me motto fer poonishment. Soon over, an' thin fer-give an' fergit. 'Don't shpa-are the shlip-per,' says Solomon, the wise king, an' ut's as throe as iver to-da-ay. Ta-ake thot fr-rum Ellen Cloonan, who knows moor-re

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about the r-raisin' uv childers than most—she thot's berried sivin."

Mrs. Cloonan paused to dump a hot boiler of clothes into the tub, behind which she stood, a red-faced oracle, wreathed in an aureole of steam.

"Av coor-rse havin' twins," she continued, "it's sum har-rder to alwa-ays be shure uv th' sinner, but be joodgematic. Her thot r-runs to ye cr-ryin' loike a hur-rt lamb to its ma, ain't anny moor-re apt to be wr-rong than the wan thot cooms calm an' pr-roper, only too willin' to confess the sins av—soomboddy else."

Mrs. Cloonan paused abruptly, finding herself alone, since Mrs. Bailey had gone back to the kitchen, where work pressed. But she went thoughtfully, for the plain-spoken Irishwoman had touched on a doubt concerning the apportionment of blame which had lingered a long while in the background of her thoughts. Agita-

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tion was not always a sign of guilt, nor was calm assurance a proof of innocence. Either might be a matter of temperament. But it surely was time that even-handed justice arose, and taking from the shoulders of the more precocious twin the brief authority she had usurped, restore to her a free and unfettered childhood.

The day wore on, and Mrs. Cloonan, having cleared away her work, took her departure with a somewhat apologetic air, as if afraid she had overstepped her bounds. Mrs. Bailey had finished her duties in the kitchen and had gone into the sewing room for a brief rest before the supper preparations began. Outside the children were playing, fussing, and squabbling.

"Now, 'Liza, you sha'n't! That's mine. I'll tell Ma!" wailed Nell.

"And I'll tell Ma," said Eliza's calm

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voice, "that you're too selfish to play nicely."

"'Tisn't so," said Nell, "but 'Liza, I do want that ribbon. Aline gave it to me. Ma-a!"

"Run away, children," said Aline with a glance at her mother's clouded face.

Mrs. Bailey was meditating a stroke of diplomacy which has often brought about the downfall of tyranny and changed the fate of nations. She was about to place the shoe upon the other foot,—a simple expedient which had many times drawn harmony out of chaos, and which brought peace to the troubled house of Bailey for weeks to come.

The twins, leaving the shelter of the veranda, now wandered off to seek a wider field of amusement and their elders were for a time relieved from the sound of their small squabbles. A little later from

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the near distance arose the sound of a familiar plaint:

"Ma-a-a, may she? Ma-a-a, I said first!"

"Oh, Mother," said Eliza elegantly, emerging from the cedar row,—Eliza occasionally impersonated Aline now, and this was her best effort,—"Please may I have the peonies, two big red ones, to carry to Miss Cates to-morrow?"

"Oh, Ma-a-a-a!" screamed Nell, panting at her heels. "I said first. Shall she have everything? Ma-a-a!"

"I asked first," said Miss Ramsay, alias Eliza, in the calm of assured victory, which twelve hours before would certainly have been hers.

"Eliza," said Mrs. Bailey, and there was a new note in her voice at which Miss Ramsay promptly dissolved into plain Eliza, "haven't I often told you not to run in ahead of Nell in this way?"

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"Yes'm," said Eliza, surprised, but truthful.

"And you remembered that it was forbidden, but did it just the same?" Mrs. Bailey's voice was firm, but not angry, and Eliza took courage.

"Yes'm," she said calmly, "but these were the first blooms, and I am the best twin, and I thought you wouldn't care."

"Then, Eliza," said Mrs. Bailey, and her voice somehow reminded Eliza of the calm when the wind whispers in the branches before the coming storm, "you may come with me."

This was a new departure, which made Eliza feel, if she could have worded it so, that the stars were out of their courses, and the world was out of joint. For Eliza to be the one to follow Mother into that secret conclave behind closed doors! That was wont to be Nell's part. But Eliza was not any more reticent than her

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twin concerning the danger which threatened.

“Ma-a-a-a!” she wailed, “I’m not like Nell. She’s used to ‘punishes’ and ‘being displeased with’; but me, I’m different. Mu-u-ther! Motho-o-r!” remembering the elegance of her diction even in this moment of excitement and danger, “you might hurt me. Remember, Mother, I’m a twin, and twins are so un-u-su-al. You wouldn’t want to break your set, would you? Ma-a-a!”

But these excited protests only lent a vocal accompaniment to a background of certain measured sounds. After a moment both noises ceased, and Eliza emerged from the secret chamber tearful and subdued, with the meekness of the martyr who enjoys his crown.

Nell, not less tearful, waited outside in the hall.

“Come an’ le’s play nicer,” she said,

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thrusting into her twin's tear-dampened hand the remnant of a sugar dog treasured since the preceding Christmas. "Le's play 'Red Riding Hood' an' her Grandmother an' the Wolf. You can be 'Red Riding Hood.'"

"I can't play 'Red Riding Hood,'" said Eliza in a meek, suffering voice. "I don't feel able. But we might play tableaux, and," with a reproachful look at her mother, "I'll be a Christian martyr forgiving his nenemies."

CHAPTER III

SUNDAY CONTEMPLATIONS

OF all the mornings of the week the twins loved Sunday the best.

Nell liked it for its pile of spotlessly white clothes on the chair by the bedside and the "all nice" things to wear, from the best shoes and stockings to the nicest frilly underwaist; last week's afternoon dresses were slipped on until after breakfast for fear of accidents to the real "Sunday" dresses. Eliza loved it for its sense of limitless leisure,—the unbounded opportunity to meditate over her stockings and deliberate over her shoes, with Eleanor downstairs dressing Baby Edgar, and Aline helping Mother with breakfast, and no one at hand to suggest the need of action or vulgar haste.

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"I b'lieve I'll wear my white dress to-day, the one with the tucks on," she considered aloud, drawing her stocking up to its full, long length, and puckering her brow as if weighing the merits of an endless array of toilets.

"Ma won't let you," said Nell, trying to tie one shoe while she stood on the other foot before the open window watching the progress of a mud-swallow's nest out under the overhanging eaves. "I b'lieve we're going to wear our new diamond calicoes, 'cause I saw Aline sewing the buttons on just when we were coming to bed last night."

Eliza pictured to herself the glories of the "diamond calicoes," so called from a spattering of tiny black and red diamonds over a white ground.

"Mine has red trimmings on the pockets, up and down, like this," pursued Nell, sitting down on the floor to put on her

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second shoe, and illustrating her words with the string on the white surface of her gown.

"Mine are crossways like this," returned Eliza with an equally adaptable shoe-string.

"Eleanor's are nicer. I can't just show them," said Nell, beginning to apply her shoestring to its proper use.

But the discussion of this and equally important topics took time, so that when breakfast was all ready and the rest of the family waiting, and Aline came to hurry the twins to their places, she found them only midway between their "nighties" and their frilly white underwaists.

"What do you children mean by sitting around in this state of nakedness?" she demanded, beginning to button and tie in indignant haste.

" 'Tisn't a state, it's a territory," ex-

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claimed Nell, giggling at her own small wit.

But Eliza began to argue.

“How can nakedness be a state, Aline?” she said. “It hasn’t any capital, and you can’t bound it.”

Here her head was smothered, as the folds of her small dress were pulled down over it, and not allowing a pause for further geographical discussion, Aline hustled the small laggards down to the dining room, where even Baby Edgar was gurgling his impatience at their delay.

A chapter from the Bible with verses read in turn—even the twins taking a laborious part—and then a short prayer formed the morning devotions in the Bailey household, and for this exercise the presence of every member of the family was required. As soon as this was over, the waiting breakfast was served, and the

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business of the morning meal proceeded. There were no dull meals at the Baileys'. Just now it was the boys' delight to tease Eliza, who had taken a dislike to milk in all its combinations, and was so vigorous in her expression of her distaste that she kept the subject constantly before her fun-loving brothers.

"Millik, milliak?" inquired Fred, making a feint of filling her mug from the big pitcher.

"Have some milk," said Aleck, trying to pour some on her porridge.

"Ma-a, must they?" cried Eliza, enlarging her borders by squaring her small arms, and defending her frontiers with outspread fingers. "Shall they spoil my breakfast?"

And although the two boys, in answer to an admonishing glance from Mother, refrained from further teasing, apprehension had seized the small twin, and fear

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was her master. From then on, as she industriously spooned her oatmeal, each morsel was subjected to a careful scrutiny to make sure that no drop of milk had contaminated its surface. This constant vigilance so prolonged her bowl of porridge that by the time she had absorbed the last sugary crumb, the older folk had all finished breakfast, and Nell, having just emerged panting from behind her mug of milk, was observing Eliza with an expression of calm disapproval.

"You look at your food so hard, just like a mother chicken hunting dinner," she remarked critically.

"I don't care 'f I do!" retorted Eliza, ruffling, "if the boys teased you all the time the way they do me, you'd look like *two* mother chickens hunting dinner."

But before these two ornithological statements could be thrashed out and established, the Sunday-school students

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were dismissed to get themselves ready for an early start. There were but four of them,—the twins, Eleanor, and Aleck. On bright days, as on the present occasion, they walked up to the church, Eleanor and Aleck, who were in advanced classes, usually walking ahead, while the two smaller ones, who were just mere “catechists,” followed leisurely by themselves.

This morning, however, when the three girls in the new “diamond” dresses gathered at the lower front entrance, Aleck was not there. He had gone on, Willis said, and quite sure that this was because it was growing late, the three girls hurried after him down the drive and out upon the long dusty road.

“I’m so afraid we’ll be late,” said Eleanor, looking impatiently at the lagging footsteps of her smaller sisters.

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"I'll hurry on, girls. It doesn't matter so much about you."

"I'll hurry, too," said Eliza, sprinting along beside her taller sister.

"An' I'll hurry," gasped Nell.

But poor Nell was the more rotund of the twins, less compact and muscular than Eliza, and although she puffed and perspired as she labored along after the others, she was rapidly falling far into the rear.

"Oh, girls," she begged, "do wait! Please, 'Liza. Please, El'nor. O-oh, Ma-a-a, must they!"

For the swift pace of the others had broken into a run, and they rapidly disappeared from sight round a bend in the road.

Pleading and crying, Nell ran, too, reached the bend, and then looked backward and forward. The girls had gone,

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and on all the long yellow road in each direction as far as she could see, there was no other person. The poor, hot, tired little twin was quite alone.

“Oh, Mama! Oh, Aline!” she sobbed softly, too frightened to cry aloud.

For to tell the whole truth, which even Eliza, her own twin, did not suspect, Nell was a coward. Accustomed though she had been from babyhood to wander through the woods and groves near home, she had never looked out into the forest without thinking that some day one of those black stumps or fallen logs might get up and prove to be a bear. She never heard a busy rustling in the brush or leaves,—which so often proved to be Rover or some friendly cow,—without a frightened catching of the breath and a flutter of the heart, lest it might turn out to be a wolf such as met Red Riding Hood.

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There was a rustling in the brush now, right beside her. Could it, oh, could it be the wolf! It was coming nearer.

"Oh, Mama! Aline!" she screamed aloud.

The hazel bushes were being pushed aside, and out came not a wolf, but Aleck, beautiful in his new blue necktie, his ivory toothpick fast between his teeth. Of the two, perhaps, he was the more surprised at this meeting; as he did not expect to find his little sister alone on the dusty highway.

"What's the matter, kiddo?" he asked in his slow, kind way.

"The girls r-ran-n an' l-left-t m-me," gulped Nell, a little ashamed of her terror now that rescue had come.

Aleck stood quite still for a moment, looking ahead intently at the bushes beside the road. It may be that he saw behind one of them a flutter of diamond cal-

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ico. That may have been why he suddenly said in quite a loud voice, "A mean trick!" And then extending a gracious forefinger, at which tired, grateful Nell clutched as a drowning man might grasp a straw, he went forward on his way to Sunday-school.

Just around the next bend of the road they came upon Eleanor and Eliza standing quietly.

"We were just waiting for you," they said a little uncertainly.

"You needn't," replied Aleck coldly, not withdrawing the helpful forefinger. "Nell is coming with me."

And now it was the other girls' turn to follow meekly behind, for Aleck took his little sister quite up to the entrance of the lower Sunday-school room, showing her into the door as if she were a grown-up lady, before going off to his own class.

They were just in time, and, a little con-

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scious of the beauty of their new dresses, the twins made their way into their own, the "middle" class. Long ago, when quite small, they had been in the "N" or "M" class, and learned their lessons by reciting the answers in concert with the teacher, until they could say "My Sponsors in Baptism" and "Yes, Verily," even in the dark. Now they were in the "Commandment" class, and had to study their lessons at home. Every Sunday they could say a little more, and finally when one could say every one of the commandments without stopping and without a mistake, she was given a little Prayer Book of her very own. Eliza could do this, and had carried her book proudly for several weeks, but Nell had not yet earned hers. Something always happened to put her out in her attempt to say them.

A Prayer Book was a coveted distinction, for next Advent those who had them

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would be put into the "Duty" class, and after that they would go into the other room, where there were three classes that studied the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels. By this time one had grown very wise and old, and the next thing he was "'firmed," which constituted graduation from the Sunday-school.

To-day, which began so inauspiciously for Nell, proceeded happily, for she said all her Commandments perfectly; and, being asked to wait a moment with the teacher, presently hurried after Eliza to show a neat, new Prayer Book of her own.

"Humph!" said Eliza, pursing her lips, "I've had mine ever and ever so long."

"That's why I like mine better," defended Nell stoutly, "'cause it's new. Yours is getting some spotty," indicating a little place under Eliza's moist thumb.

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Eliza gazed at it anxiously, wondering whether or not she might remove it with an application of her small red tongue. Just then the doors into the chapel were opened, and the children poured in, each one hurrying with prim and squeaky shoes to the parent pew.

How the twins did love this little dark old-fashioned chapel! They were never tired of studying its narrow diamond-paned windows of stained glass, so overgrown on the outside with ivy and trumpet-creeper that on all but the brightest Sundays, reading was difficult in the shady corners. The quaint old chancel was a delight to older eyes than those of the twins, with its long dull-black railing, at the corners of which stood two old-fashioned pulpits that could be entered only from the back. They also enjoyed the great stained win-

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dow directly back of the chancel and the dark-blue ceiling above, spotted all over with shiny gilt stars.

"Just like the starry heavens," explained Eliza to Nell as they looked at it to-day, for she had heard Miss Cates say that to a sightseer.

The twins had been trained in church-going from their infancy, and there was no portion of the service in which they did not take an interested part, crooning softly through the Psalms and hymns, and following the Psalter with a gentle "m-m-m" of sound when the reading was too difficult or too fast for them. Even the sermon held much for them to enjoy, though one would hardly have thought this, since Dr. Smith was of the old school, and very old at that; but here, too, the twins were loyal to their own.

"I don't believe that even Emporia has

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any minister who can hit the pulpit and holler like Dr. Smith," said Eliza admiringly to Willis.

And Willis, who, full of young thoughts and new ideas, found the old minister somewhat prosy, admitted drily that this was probably the case.

To-day as they settled back for the sermon, Nell arranged herself in a comfortable place against Mother's arm, where, when the pulpit thumping became monotonous, and the good doctor had soared quite beyond the limits of her comprehension, she could indulge in the little nap which Eliza found so reprehensible. Eliza, however, sat upright, alert and awake to every peculiarity of pose or manner throughout the congregation. When Miss Cates leaned her head sideways, Eliza did the same; when Mrs. Smith cast up her eyes and sighed, the child fol-

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lowed her example; and when Mrs. Ellis dusted her nose with her handkerchief, the small mimic repeated the act.

But the doctor was nearing the climax of his sermon, for which both the children watched and waited, and which they repeated with varying gestures and inflections throughout the week.

"Shall I say it?" he cried, his voice shaking with emotion. "Shall I say it?" almost in tears. "I shall say it," he suddenly shouted, striking the pulpit a fearful blow, "I shall say it! And the smallest among you will understand me when I say that the transcendentalism of the idiosyncrasies of the present generation requires it."

Eliza cast up her eyes with an ecstatic sigh. "The smallest among you." That meant her, and also Nell, who sat sleeping like a little stupid, though she certainly looked very comfortable. It must be the

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colored windows which made one's eyes feel so funny, Eliza thought; perhaps she had better close hers for a moment. She had scarcely done so, however, when the congregation got up to sing. And then right away church was over, and the people were coming out and saying,

"How d'ye do?"

"Such a fine sermon!"

"Looks as if we might have rain."

Then they were all being packed in the surrey, except Mother and Willis, who went in the little phaeton ahead.

"Such a very 'structive sermon," said Eliza, folding her hands piously, and looking reprovingly at Nell who, with cheeks still flushed from her prolonged nap, sat hugging her little new Prayer Book sleepily.

Aleck looked round mischievously.

"Don't believe you can tell us the end of it," he challenged.

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"Course I can, too," said Eliza haughtily, "'f I'd stop to think, but I know it was 'structive, 'cause Mis' Cooke said so."

"What was the end of it, Nell?" asked Aleck, smiling.

And Nell, who forgot texts and slept through sermons, roused, and said distinctly:

"I am 'quested to announce that there will be a Strawberry Festible for the children of the Sunday-school at Mr. Mal-lory's grove on July the Fourth, picnic dinner at twelve o'clock."

"For children, really, Aline?" demanded Eliza, forgetting the ignominy of being caught napping in her delight at this joyous prospect.

And when Aline had assured them that it was surely for the children, with the grown-ups only to help with the dinner and to care for the little ones, Eliza was too happy to grudge Nell her small tri-

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umph of having waked up just as the sermon ended so that she could tell this wonderful news.

“ ’Cause I heard all the really ’structive part,” asserted Eliza piously, “so it doesn’t matter if I did close my eyes for a few minutes when it was just pleasure;” and her pose would have done credit to a “Fra Angelica.”

“Call snoring like a grampus for a half an hour just closing your eyes, huh?” teased Fred, with a sly wink at Aleck.

“Never neither!” cried Eliza, ruffling like a cross pigeon. “Did I, Aline?”

But before Aline could come to the rescue of Eliza’s wounded dignity, they had rounded the curve to the front door of their home. The twins scrambled out of the surrey, and hurried into the house to get Mother to verify the glad tidings of a “really and truly” festival for the children on the Fourth of July. Having all

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doubts on this score doubly settled, they clambered upstairs to have their big aprons put on so that the new dresses might retain some semblance of cleanliness, at least until sunset.

"I wish it was Fourth of July to-morrow," said Eliza, squirming away as soon as the last button was finished.

"I guess Ma and Aline don't," said Nell, who was about as easy to fasten up as an energetic eel, "'cause we got to have clean clothes an' dinners an' everything."

"Then I s'pose we'll have to work," said Eliza with a deep sigh, as they hurried downstairs in answer to the dinner bell.

Although Sunday afternoon was not as eventful as the morning, it still had many charms. For one thing, the boys were at home, and with the grown-up folk all together there was endless opportunity for eavesdropping, which, though the conversation was vague, and brought little that

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was stirring or sensational, as the Baileys did not gossip, was still interesting. Then there was always a possibility of capturing some person detached from the general group, and securing a story by way of ransom. Sometimes there was a walk in the yard with some one to see the flowers, or a tour of inspection through the big vegetable garden beyond the barn. Of one delightful treat they were always sure, and that was the privilege of going with Aleck for the cows; and as this lover of birds and nature was never in a hurry, the walk was a joy which might prolong itself into indefinite side-trips to see birds' nests and visit bee-trees, until the cows fairly bellowed to be taken home and milked.

On this particular Sunday after all these joys had been partaken of, as well as the light early supper, the twins came out on the west porch, where the setting

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sun proclaimed the beginning of the pleasant long twilight, and found Herbert in his best clothes carefully strapping the saddle on Polly's back.

"Oh, Herbert, please give me a ride," begged Eliza, fearlessly hungry for adventure, "just a little, teenty one."

"Just to the gate then," said Herbert, with unexpected good humor, lifting her to the stirrup.

Eliza with mighty struggles scrambled upward, finally gaining a seat in the saddle, but, unfortunately, facing the wrong way.

"Come on, Sis," said Herbert, reaching for Nell, who hastily ran back on the porch, being as timid with horses as Eliza was venturesome.

"Le's not wait for her, she's 'fraid," called the small equestrian from the heaving heights of Polly's roan back, where she overlooked that animal's short and

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skimpy tail. "But Herbert, how'll I do? Must I back her all the way to the gate?"

Herbert relieved Polly from the necessity of this inconvenient mode of locomotion by turning the small rider face forward, and Eliza experienced the fearful joy of a "jiggledy-joggledy" ride on Polly's back to the front gate.

"Oh, Herbert!" she then begged, "let me go farther. Take me all the way. Just this once."

"Not much!" laughed Herbert, setting the small youngster on the ground, and springing lightly to the saddle. "I don't need anybody to help me fly my kite now, thank you. I can manage it all right alone."

"What kite, Herbert?" called Eliza after him. "Where do you fly it?"

But Polly's brisk canter carried him quickly beyond the reach of her voice, and she plodded slowly back to the front door

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pondering on the mystery of Herbert's Sunday evening's game.

Left alone, Nell had wandered round to the side door where Fred was giving an extra polish to an already brilliant pair of shoes. Fred was in his Sunday best, too, and like Herbert, showed every indication of an intended jaunt.

"Why don't you go horseback like Herbert?" she began inquisitively. "Won't anybody let you have a horse?"

"Sure thing!" said Fred jovially, beginning on his second shoe. "The horse I take is Shank's mare. She's always ready, saddled and bridled, whenever I want to start."

Nell looked puzzled and interested.

"Which one is that?" she said, considering. "I don't 'member any but Polly an' Jim an' Bill an' Jerry an' Betsy an' Fan. We haven't any other."

"That's all you know about it," re-



A "JIGGLEDY-JOGGLEDY" RIDE.—Page 91.



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turned Fred, putting down his foot and shaking himself carefully to settle his garments into place. "We use Shank's mare more than all the others. Just ask any one you know."

And Fred took his departure as abruptly as Herbert had done, leaving the twins to each other's society, face to face with these two unsuspected mysteries.

"Some nonsense of the boys," was all Mother said when they asked her, for there was company in the parlor, and she could spare time only to unbutton the little girls and send them upstairs to help each other to bed.

Still puzzled, they climbed the stairs, and even the delightful thought of the coming Festival was almost lost sight of in their bewilderment over these strange new problems. Where and why did Herbert fly his kite on Sunday? And which horse was Shank's mare?

CHAPTER IV

THE LOST BABY

ELIZA'S worst fears of work were realized, because, with an extra large ironing on hand and a lunch to be prepared, the next few days were all too short for the many duties to be performed. By Tuesday afternoon Eleanor had been drawn into the thick of the preparations, and her usual duty, the care of Baby Edgar, must fall to the unwilling twins.

"Now be careful with little Brother," said Mother, tying on Baby's bonnet and placing him in his little go-cart. "Keep him in the yard, and don't run away and leave him."

The little girls sighed heavily. The yard was large and shady. There were

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times when it stretched away into a vast forest in which the "Babes in the Woods" must inevitably be lost, and in whose depths "Bo Peep's" flock were promptly swallowed up. Up the heights of its slender hickory trees "Jack-the-Giant-Killer," after many days of weary climbing, might readily find a giant's house; and among the shrubs and flower beds in front of the house, "Beauty's" father must surely have plucked the forbidden rose which brought him under the displeasure of the dreadful "Beast."

But to-day the yard was small and homely, while below the hill the ferns in the dell beckoned irresistibly with their tiny curling fingers, and the stream, murmuring over its shiny pebbles, sang an alluring siren's song.

"Oh, Ma, must we stay in the yard?" pleaded Nell. "Everything here is so common and every-day-y."

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"Mayn't we go down to the stream," begged Eliza. "It's so cool there, and we'll be so careful."

"Oh, please, Ma!" cried Nell, chiming in again. "Just down to the 'Beach,' Ma. It's so level and nice, and has so many pretty stones."

"Please, Ma!" begged Eliza.

"Oh, please, Ma!" begged Nell again, until Mrs. Bailey, thinking that the "Beach" was the little pebbly flat below the hill, and not guessing it was what they had named the broad level where the brook joined the creek down near the pasture, said "Yes," with many cautions about not leaving little Edgar, nor letting him get in the water, to all of which the twins consented with sincere eagerness.

How wonderful it was to walk unattended along the stream, as it wound and zigzagged its way down between the two long hills! They would hardly have ex-

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pected to be allowed to come so far alone, and now not only to come, but to bring Baby Edgar, who was really much more interesting than just a plain doll! Surely the Fates were good to them.

To be sure, the brambles did come a little close to the stream in places. They had not noticed this when they came with Aleck. Perhaps he had gone ahead and drawn them aside, they couldn't remember: but to-day the brambles were quite too much for the small girls. It must have been that with Aleck they had crossed over and walked on the other side of the brook, where the bank was low and extended back to the opposite hill in a broad, level sweep.

Here the stream was wide, but shallow, as its bright pebbly bottom showed. Nothing would be easier than to wheel the go-cart over to the other side. Of course when Aleck was there, he carried them

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across, but who minded a little water? Mama had said they could go to the "Beach," and this was the only way to get there. So down the slope to the stream they started, Eliza ahead to guide and steady the cart,—for it was a little steep here, and Nell behind to hold it back and wheel.

Now Nell said it would have been all right, if Eliza had only steadied as she should, and Eliza said it wouldn't have happened, if Nell had held back. At any rate, the cart rolled quickly down a slope quite too steep to be safe for babies and small girls, struck a stone, and, tilting sideways, slid little Edgar right into the middle of the brook.

Fortunately the cart was low and the water shallow, so that Baby was not in the least bit hurt. He gave just one frightened cry at the sudden surprise, and then



AND ELIZA SAID IT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF NELL HAD HELD
BACK.— *Page 98.*

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began to spat the water with his hands and to laugh and gurgle just as he did in his bath at home. Thankful that he did not cry, but horrified to think what might have been the consequences of such a dreadful accident, the twins, with many tugs and grunts, managed to get their fat little brother back on the grassy shore, where he at once set up a whimpering protest against this unwelcome change from a beloved and congenial element.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Eliza, Miss Ramsay to the life. "That child hasn't a dry stitch on him."

"Oh, 'Liza!" Nell gasped, "what will Mama say!"

The twins looked at each other with dismayed, widening eyes of fright. Sure enough, what might Mother say, with the "Festible" only two days off!

"First," said Eliza, recovering herself

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in a handsome, grown-up way, "we've got to change every rag on him from the skin out."

Here again they stopped to stare at each other dejectedly, for where was the change? Up at the house, where they daren't tell Mother. Anxiously they investigated their own toilets, but there was not a scrap to spare. A hot day and everything in the wash does not encourage extra furbelows, and because of the temperature the twins were content with the acme of simplicity. But again Eliza arrived at a prompt and important decision: "We've just got to take 'em all off to dry, an' then dress him again," she declared, with an air of great energy.

"An'-an' not tell Ma?" asked Nell, dizzied with the magnitude of the crime contemplated.

"Not till after the Festible," returned Eliza decidedly, "'cause she's busy, an'

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she might worry. By'm by after it's all over, an' she's all rested, we might say some time, 'Why, Ma, I don't believe we told you, but Edgar got a little wet that day we had him, but we dried him off ourselves so's not to bother you.' "

While Eliza had been unfolding this daring scheme, her hands were busy unbuttoning, unpinning, and peeling off the moist and clinging garments which enfolded Edgar's fat little person like the layers on a corpulent onion. And as soon as she comprehended that this meant safety and escape from the possible and probable punishment of staying home from the "Festible," Nell was a zealous and eager helper in the task. Even Edgar, who, in his state of primal innocence, welcomed this return to the customs of distant Eden, lent a pair of pudgy hands; and when the "last stitch," as Eliza expressed it, was hung on a bramble bush to

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dry, he rolled himself about in the soft bed of clover and blue grass, clutching for his wiggling, pink toes, and gurgling his joy at this release from the fetters which man has been compelled to wear as a penalty for his first disobedience.

It was a good drying day, and the children zealously tended and turned the tiny garments, pulling and smoothing meanwhile to disguise the roughness of the dampened cloth.

"They look kind of dirty, seems to me," said Eliza, trying to smear off a muddy streak with very grimy fingers. "But then, Edgar always gets his clothes dirty, you know."

"I know he does, awful dirty!" assented Nell, who was attempting to lick a grass stain off the front of the little white dimity dress, "and when we get all these nice dry things back on him, he'll look just as good as when we got him."

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There might have been two opinions about that, since the buttons were askew, the strings knotted, and there were dark and unusual streaks in unexpected places. The work of dressing him was more arduous than they had expected, for Baby Edgar was no light weight, and he hindered all he could with gurgles and "goos" and jumps of delight at the unusual character of the afternoon's entertainment. By the time he was dressed, however, he was growing sleepy; and when they had leaned him back in his little cart, and had drawn him into the shade of a large blackberry bush, his bright, dark eyes were shut fast, and Baby was off for his afternoon nap.

After the strenuous activities of the past hour, this sudden quiet seemed tame and wearisome.

"I suppose now we can't go to the Beach," said Nell, looking at her sleeping

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brother in a resigned fashion, "but we can play here. 'Nennyway, I'm tired."

"So'm I," said Eliza, clambering up on a stump to take a look round.

Now if Eliza had not taken this look, it is possible that the twins might have finished out their playtime here by Edgar's cart, and then taken him quietly home before sundown; and all would have gone well. But the stump was high, and from its top Eliza could see completely over the surrounding sea of bramble-bushes and horse-weeds.

"Why, Nell," she announced excitedly, "we're just there! The Beach is right on the other side of these weeds."

"It's just like here," said Nell, who was busy collecting pink pebbles from the rippling water.

"Why, Nell Bailey!" said Eliza scornfully. "To say that, when it has all that wide, flat water an' all those skippy stones!

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'Sides that, there's a bird's-nest in that gooseberry-bush. Aleck told me."

"We can't leave Edgar," said Nell, hesitating.

She did want some "skippy" stones. One could make them hop along over the water so prettily, and then the bird's-nest—

"Why can't we?" argued Eliza vigorously. "It's just past those weeds. Don't we go that far from our *Jemima* and *Eudora* every day, and does anything hurt them?"

"Edgar might wake up," faltered Nell, for she really wanted to go.

"Wake up!" sniffed Eliza, moving slowly along towards the high weeds beyond which lay the much desired haven. "Guess you don't know much about Edgar, if you don't 'member how he sleeps nours and nours."

Eliza was wading through the weeds

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now, but Nell came after her with a rush, loth to leave Edgar, but more unwilling to be left behind.

“Course we won’t stay but a minute,” said Eliza, as they passed the thicket of weeds—which extended farther than they realized—and came out upon the Beach, quite a field in itself. “Think I want to leave my little brother all alone by himself for long?”

But it took a good while to get down to the gooseberry-bush, and it was a long time before they were tired of peering at the wonders of the dear little nest in its shelter. They must not touch it, Aleck said, though they might look at it, if the mother bird was not at home. And it took so long to gather the flat “skippy” stones; they might want so many.

It was while they were stooping for these that Eliza saw the sun under the very lowest branches of the trees, and

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realized that it was getting near sundown, and that they, with Baby Edgar, were a long way from the safe home yard.

"Quick, Nell," she said, pointing to the lowering sun.

And then without so much as a parting glance at the nest in the gooseberry-bush, whose owner was now at hand, uttering loud protesting chirps, they hurried down the length of the Beach, passed the long strip of weeds and brambles, which now seemed to reach out thorny, hindering fingers, and finally reached the open sweep of ground where they had left the little cart. There were the brambles on which they had hung the little wardrobe; there was the shallow water with its troublesome steep place where they had spilled the dear, good-natured little fellow; there was the ruffled, tumbled place in the grass where he had rolled and crowed while his clothes were drying. But nowhere, under

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bush or weed, or even in the high grass, where they searched anxiously and long, could they find a trace of little Edgar.

"Bears!" gasped Nell with quivering lips.

Eliza laughed scornfully, though her lips were none too firm.

"Humph!" she retorted, "would bears take the cart, too?"

"Wolves might," suggested Nell somewhat reassured. "They're pretty smart. Red Riding Hood's Wolf might have taken it."

"Well, he isn't here!" said Eliza crossly, for she, too, was frightened. "We've just got the wrong place. It must have been further along."

And although Nell was sure it was the right place, and showed her the marks of the wheels and their foot-prints, they searched farther and farther down, until they came quite to the foot of their own

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hill. By that time the sun had set, and the twilight was fading, but still they found no Edgar.

"I tell you," said Eliza stoutly, though her own heart was like lead within her, "we won't say one word about it. Perhaps Ma won't think of Edgar, if we don't remind her, and first thing when we wake in the morning, we'll run right out and get him. We've just missed the place somehow. That's all. Now don't cry, or Ma'll 'spect something right away, and ask, 'Where's Edgar?'"

Then, though it was very hard to do it with their hearts so full of anxiety and fright for little Brother, the twins stole up to the house,—a drooping, downcast little pair. Supper was just on the table, and Aline pounced upon them to clean them up, saying nothing as she looked sharply at their frightened little faces. It seemed as if every one looked hard at

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them when they came to the table, where, of course, Edgar was not expected, since he always went to bed early. But no one asked any questions, nor expressed any surprise that the twins were not hungry, although supper was already very late.

"Tired," said Aline, looking intently at Mother, when the little girls turned away from their good bread and butter and fruit.

Mother asked if they would like to go right up to bed.

"Yes," they answered eagerly, anxious to have the night over, so they might go out to search again for the bush beneath whose shelter they had placed the little cart.

Mother did not talk much as she put the twins to bed, but they were too wretched to notice, too eager to be in bed and asleep so that daylight would come

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sooner. And then Mother went away, and took the light, and they were left there to look at the dark and to think of little Brother out all alone in the bushes. What if a wolf should come? Or a bear?

"Oh, Ma-a-a!" wailed Nell, the burden of her grief and naughtiness becoming too heavy for her to bear.

Eliza the brave, the resourceful, echoed the same cry.

Then right away, almost as if she had not gone downstairs at all, Mother came back. She really had been just in the next room expecting that cry, feeling sure that little girls who had learned the "N" or "M" catechism and could say the Ten Commandments, knew that it was wrong to go away and lose their little brother, and would very soon be sorry, and tell Mother all about it.

And they did tell, one helping the other

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in their zeal that nothing be missed, so that it was sometimes very hard for Mother to understand.

“And we couldn’t find the bush where we left him,” sobbed the careless little sinners, “and we didn’t like to tell, fear we’d miss the Festible. But we don’t care ’bout that now, just so you send Aleck or Fred out to find him—under a bush—in his go-cart—”

And their grief and penitence were so nearly hysterical that Mother took them from their little bed, and led them, all shaken with sobs, over to the north chamber where, safe in his own little crib, lay fat Baby Edgar, fast asleep.

After they had each been allowed to kiss him, very softly so that he should not waken, Mother told them how Herbert, coming from the field, had found little Edgar, and brought him home, and how she had decided that it was best not to say

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anything, but to let the little culprits make their own confession. The twins went back to their own little bed again; but now the dark brought no picture of a terrified lost baby; and although they knew almost surely that little girls who ran away and left their little brother, did not deserve to go to Festivals, they were too happy at being relieved of that dreadful burden of fear for little Edgar's safety to really care.

When Mother called them to care for Baby the next afternoon, they did not ask to leave the yard. To-day it seemed very spacious and full of charm. So they wheeled him back and forth through the walks and drive, playing it was an enchanted wilderness, where they might at any time meet a fairy godmother, and have their best wish granted. Strangely enough, this very nearly happened, for when Edgar had been put to bed, Mother

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smilingly told them that they should go to the Festival after all.

“Mother thinks,” she said, speaking very slowly and distinctly, “that the fright and unhappiness of thinking you had lost little Brother will be enough to help you remember him always after this.”

And the twins, with a shuddering recollection of the moment when they had pictured Baby Edgar, frightened and crying alone in the dark, thought so, too.

CHAPTER V

THE FESTIVAL

ALTHOUGH the Fourth of July Festival was primarily for the children of the Sunday-school, their grown-up brothers and sisters were invited and urged to come, not only to aid in serving the feast, but to help entertain the children afterwards. This was why the Baileys's big surrey was packed to the full, when it arrived at Mr. Malory's grove about eleven o'clock of the long-anticipated day. Eleanor and the twins were there all dressed alike in their new calicoes, "just like three little dogs with exactly the same spots," said Eleanor crossly, at which the twins looked at her with indignant amazement. To be un-

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willing to dress like one's own sisters was to them repudiating the ties of relationship, as anything different from having all their dresses off the same piece was quite outside the limits of their experience.

As soon as the twins alighted, they hastened to find out who else was there; and, to their delight, saw Miss Betty Mallory, who had been their teacher in the "N" or "M" class years ago when they were young, and who still kept up her interest in them, though she had since moved to Emporia. Full of shy pleasure, they hurried over to greet her and to hear the enthusiastic expression of joy with which she always accosted them.

"Ah, here are my twinnies!" she called, hurrying forward to throw an arm about each, "and such big girls they are growing to be, almost up to my waist! Now what are you doing? Going to Sunday-

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school, I suppose, Eliza always knowing her lessons, and Nell making hard work of it, but catching up by and by. Is that it?"

"I said the 'mandments and got my Prayer Book," announced Nell in sudden eagerness.

"You didn't!" Miss Betty's interest and delight were beautiful. "Now don't you remember I promised that when you had earned your book, I would give you my old doll, my Sambo, to help you with your work? I'll get him for you right away, before it's time to wait on the table."

Always brisk and eager, Miss Betty hurried into the house where, in her brother's attic, she still kept stored her childhood's treasures. In a few moments she was back, carrying a black doll dressed like a footman.

"Here he is," she said, holding him up

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tenderly. "He isn't very handsome, but how useful! You have no idea! When I was a little girl, he did all my work. If I had dusting or dishes to do, I just said, 'Sambo, here's work for you.' Of course I had to go along to superintend, but he was always there to help, and you have no idea how much easier it made everything."

"More interesting, too," said Eliza in her grown-up way, examining the doll critically.

She was not envious or jealous, there was none of that in Eliza's disposition. She might covet your starry crown or one of your thorns of martyrdom, but none of your personal possessions.

She could see a great advantage in such a servant as Sambo, and was glad that Nell possessed him. In peeling the potatoes and doing the dishes, tasks which

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began to loom darkly ahead of them, he would be invaluable.

Just then there was a call for Miss Betty to help at the tables, and she hurried over, with the children at her side, Nell too happy for words. To be with her beloved Miss Betty and to have a new doll,—a servant doll, who had helped Miss Betty, and who would after this help little Nell! How kind Miss Betty was, but how busy! How fast her hands had to fly, making and piling up sandwiches! If she only had Sambo now to help her!

“Sambo, here’s work to do,” said Nell softly, repeating the magic formula in Miss Betty’s behalf; and pretending that he was actively assisting, Nell danced her doll along the edge of the table.

“Look out, Nell Bailey!” warned Eliza, her critical eyes missing nothing. “Just see, Miss Betty, she danced her

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doll's old black foot right on that nice san'wich."

"That won't matter," replied Miss Betty merrily, for she loved to tease, "I'll just give her that sandwich for her own dinner."

And placing the contaminated portion on a plate—for the children were gathering to the tables now,—she set it before the drooping and abashed twin. If she had looked up as she did this, and had seen how Nell's face had changed from its expression of childish joy to one of shamed self-consciousness, she would never have singled her out for even such a tiny stroke of discipline at the beautiful, much-anticipated picnic. But she did not look, and Nell drooped alone, the light gone out of the sun, the blue gone out of the sky.

How could Sambo have been so clumsy! To kick his old foot like that!

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And here she was punished at a picnic, before everybody, and had to eat dirty bread, or else starve! Nell pinched a tiny bit off one corner of the sandwich. It certainly had a sandy, gritty taste. Doubtless Sambo, who had been a servant all his life, had not been taught to wash his feet. And yet she had to eat that sandwich, 'cause 'Liza told. An' her brothers would all be mad at her, acting so, an' Aline wouldn't like it; and Mr. Rogers saw, and maybe he'd think, 'cause her little sister didn't know more'n to dance her nigger doll over the bread, Aline couldn't have the school, and she wanted it so. And Nell's shamed little head drooped lower and lower.

Yes, Mr. Rogers had seen, and what was more, he understood. Mr. Rogers understood a good many things. That was why he was superintendent of the city schools of Emporia at the early

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age of twenty-eight. Understanding, he made his way around to the children's table.

"Where's that doll, that fine black fellow I saw skipping around here?" he began, to lead up to his point.

"He's there," said Miss Betty, pointing to where the doll lay as forlorn and dejected as his mistress. "He stepped on a sandwich, and—" Here Miss Betty's glance fell on the shamed little twin, and she, too, understood.

"Stepped on a sandwich, you say?" said Mr. Rogers with apparent eagerness. "Could you spare that one for me, Madam? I've heard that 'nigger toes' are considered a great delicacy down in—in Brazil, but I've never tasted a sandwich flavored with one."

"Here 'tis," said Eliza, indicating Nell's despised portion.

Mr. Rogers managed to find a place

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between the two children, and, begging a share of Nell's sandwich, praised its flavor until the forlorn little girl, tasting it, too, found to her surprise that the queer gritty taste was all gone, and that it was sweet white bread and butter. By the time they had eaten another and yet another sandwich together, and then had taken berries and cream, the games had begun, and Nell was chasing Mr. Rogers in "Drop the Handkerchief," and enjoying herself in many delightful ways.

"Don't be so *busterous*," reproved Eliza, who ran with one elbow close to her side and her shoulders stiff, like Miss Cates. "You act just as happy as if you lived here."

"I don't care. I caught Mr. Rogers in 'Drop the Handkerchief,'" returned Nell proudly, "and nobody else could, not even Aline. Oh, there he goes now!" her sharp eyes catching sight of a light

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carriage down by the entrance gate, "and Aline's going to ride home with him! Le's us go, too!"

"Le's," agreed Eliza, raising her voice with Nell.

"Wait, Aline! Wait for us! We'll come. Wait! Ma-a-a, must she?"

For Aline had stepped lightly into Mr. Rogers' waiting buggy, and had driven off without even hearing the protests of her small sisters. Nell thought that Mr. Rogers heard, from the flash of fun that crossed his face, but he merely raised his hat in thanks to Herbert for holding his horse, and drove off quickly without even looking up the drive, down which the twins came shrieking,

"Wait, Aline. We'll come, too. Wait! Oh, Ma-a-a, make her wait!"

"It's a wonder you couldn't roar some," said Herbert crossly, when he reached them.



NELL WAS CHASING MR. ROGERS.—Page 123.





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Then they saw their own surrey driving up to the gate with Fred and Willis in the front seat. People were packing to go home, and the picnic was over.

"I'm going to tell Ma how Aline went off and left us," complained Nell, clambering into the surrey.

"I would," said Willis, sarcastically. "Maybe she'll get spanked."

Willis did not look very well pleased himself; he hated picnics, and had come to this only because Aline had begged him to; and now she had gone off and left him as well as the twins. For a few moments there was a busy time packing baskets and people in the surrey, and then they started, the twins loudly airing their grievance.

"An' there she went off an' left us, her own little sisters, that she brought to the picnic," grumbled Nell. "Lef' us alone, while she went off with a *man*."

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"An' he wasn't even any 'lation to her," scolded Eliza, "but she went off with him, and left her own little sisters, just as if she liked him best."

"Just wait till I get home," said Nell wrathfully, "an' I'll say to her—this is what I'll say, 'Ain't you 'shamed of yourself, Aline, leaving your sisters to go off like that with a man, just 's if you liked other folks better'n your own 'lations.'" "

"An' next week when Aline wants me to get her thimble or pick up her thread," chimed in Eliza, "what'll I say to her? I'll say, 'Asking your little sister that you left at the picnic to do things for you! Why don't you ask your Mr. Rogers?' That's what I'll say."

But when they reached home and the twins were ready to release—one could hardly say their bottled wrath, since it had effervesced during all the homeward journey—and were fully prepared to pour

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out the vials of their wrath upon the recreant Aline, behold, she was not there!

They heard Herbert telling Mother that she and Mr. Rogers had gone to Fielding to take a picnic supper with Cousin Martha, and that they would stay for the fireworks.

"We boys are invited, too," added Herbert, "so just as quick as we can get the chores done and change teams, we are going to drive on up."

"Never mind about the chores," called Willis from the hall, "I'll see to them. You get your other team, and hurry along."

"All right, we'll be ready in a minute," said the twins, skipping out of the surrey, and hurrying up the stairs.

They thought they heard a chuckle from Willis as they passed, but they were too busy to notice in their concern to smooth their hair, which was quite rough

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with running, and to wipe their little grimy fingers. In the midst of these preparations for a second festivity, they were horrified to hear the rattle of wheels at the front door and then down the drive.

"Wait, wait!" they screamed, hurrying down the stairs. "Oh, don't let them go, Willis! Ma-a, Ma-a-a!"

For down at the end of the drive, turning into the main road, the surrey was out of hearing and fast disappearing from sight.

"Wait, wait!" shrieked the twins, preparing to race after, when Mother came hurrying from the dining room.

"Oh, Ma, Ma, they've gone and left us!" cried the little sisters, too much exhausted with screaming to do more than sob.

"Dear children," said Mother, laying a tender hand on each frowsy little head,

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"you could not go on that long drive to be out so late. You are far too young."

"Young!" Nell's voice thrilled with scorn at the very thought. "I guess I beat Aline running to-day, and I waked up before the sermon was out last Sunday."

"I'm not young," said Eliza, likewise denying the soft impeachment. "Haven't I had measles? An' I quit drinking milk like a baby long ago."

"But you are too young for this," insisted Mother, "so is Eleanor. She is putting Baby Edgar to bed, while I set out a little supper for the picknickers. Then I'll take you to bed."

But the twins, satiated with picnic, said that they did not want any supper, and that they would put themselves to bed. So they retired upstairs in gloom, friendless and forlorn,—having a mother who did not love them enough to let them go

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to fireworks, one sister who denied the bonds of relationship so far as to go riding with a man who was not even one of the family, and another who was so unsisterly as to want to dress differently, and brothers who drove away and left them behind. Their sorrows were too deep for tears.

"I'm just going to have the measles all over again," declared Nell, as she and Eliza struggled with each other's buttons, "and this time maybe I'll die. *Then* I guess they'll be sorry they didn't treat me nicer."

But Eliza was considering a deeper, more profound revenge. Some time when folks treated her like this, maybe a fairy would step up and say:

"Come with me, Princess Goldilocks. Long years ago you were stolen from your parents, the King and Queen, and

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I come to restore you to their waiting arms."

Then she would have a crown and jewels and all kinds of beautiful things, and if she wanted fireworks she could have barrels full right in the castle yard. But she would not forget the people she had lived with so long. She would send them presents, perhaps she would let Nell come and see her; but she would always have a sad, sad face, caused by the pain their cruelty had given her.

But here Eliza's fairy dreams ended suddenly, just as Nell's picture of her family weeping over her little green grave had vanished; and neither little twin wakened when Mother gently finished their undressing, and tucked them safely into bed.

CHAPTER VI

BEING PHOTOGRAPHED

I DO declare!" said Aline, looking intently at Nell's rosy cheeks, as she slipped off the small dress Aline was fitting, "I believe that child is actually getting fat."

"Lemme see," said Eliza, crowding up, and turning sideways to get a closer look at Nell's round chin, which she scanned for a moment of profound consideration. "She is, too," she finally concluded, drawing her lower lip in quite out of sight and setting a row of scandalized upper teeth over it. "Really and truly fat, just like Mis' Dooley."

"Not neither," contradicted Nell in startled surprise, which was hardly to be wondered at, for Mrs. Dooley was of

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mountainous stature, and weighed something over two hundred and fifty pounds.

"Mebbe you will be," persisted Eliza wisely. "Now't you've begun, you may get fatter and fatter and more fatter and more fatter, an'—"

Here Eliza paused for words to express the magnificent corpulence painted by her glowing thoughts.

"I won't either! I sha'n't! Will I, Aline?" begged Nell in an agony of apprehension over the gloomy future unfolded for her by Eliza, upon whose calm judgment she was wont to rely.

But Aline was so busy considering whether, out of the material provided for new dresses for the girls, she could not squeeze a little apron for Edgar, that she did not observe the startling growth and inflorescence of the tiny seed of thought she had carelessly dropped into small Eliza's fertile brain.

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"Mebbe you will," repeated Eliza, whose imagination flourished like a green bay-tree, and flowered with more than tropical profusion, "an' you might keep on an' on, till you was bigger'n Mis' Dooley, an' nen you'd have to go in a side-show like the fat woman in the circus, an' Aleck would drive you, an' he'd say, 'Ten cents to see the Fat Lady,' 'cause you wouldn't be a little girl any more, you'd be so fat."

"Ma-a-a, must she! Will I? Shall he?" shrieked Nell, utterly distracted by the extent and enormity of the corporosity foreshadowed in this gloomy picture.

"Eliza, what nonsense are you talking?" demanded Aline, suddenly waking up to her surroundings. "Nell, don't be foolish; it's very nice to be fat, I'm sure. Eliza, if you tease any more, I'll send you upstairs," and unaware that she had but carelessly confirmed Eliza's most

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dreadful predictions, Aline went back to her patterns.

Silence reigned for a moment,—stunned silence on Nell's part, for Aline had not denied it, and it must be going to be true. She was indeed going to be a "Fat Lady," one who had to sit on a big box, 'cause chairs wouldn't hold her. She'd probably have to give her little red chair to Edgar. And she couldn't ride in the surrey any more 'nless she went alone. Maybe she'd go in a auto, they were strong,—she and Aleck. And when they had gone and gone, they would have ten "centses" and ten "centses." Nell was beginning to overlook the disadvantages of the situation in considering the number of ten "centses" she and Aleck would accumulate to bring home and buy candy and dresses and neckties; and in the beauty and extent of the list she was becoming quite happy again, when casting

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up her eyes to aid her in considering how much two sticks of candy and one red hair-ribbon would cost, her glance fell upon her twin.

Eliza, denied the privilege of speech, was making use of the natural language of children and primitive people to depict to her sister the vastness, the magnitude of the adipose tissue which she was rapidly accumulating. Holding her mouth puckered to a mere dot, Eliza had puffed her cheeks out nearly to the point of bursting, while she held both hands with outspread fingers about ten inches from each side of her small stomach, to indicate the vast growth and protuberance of this portion of Nell's body when she had become "fatter'n Mis' Dooley" and traveled in a side-show.

"Oh, Aline, 't isn't so! Must she?" wailed Nell suddenly, and then Aline again waked to the situation.

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"Why in the world must you twins always squabble so!" she remonstrated. "Eliza, you run upstairs and help dress Edgar, and, Nell, put these pins back in the cushion."

Going back to her cutting out, Aline still did not understand how the trouble arose; nor did she realize that here beside her, arranging the pins in circles, zigzag, crosswise, was the future "Fat Lady" of Smith Brothers' Circus, who had dedicated all her ten "centses" to the pleasure and support of her family.

But Nell's face stayed fat, in spite of her efforts to conceal it by holding her hands under her ears, until at supper even Father, who was home at the time, noticed.

"Getting to be our little round-faced girl again, isn't she?" he said, smiling.

But he spoke with no dark portent of side-shows or Fat Ladies; and Nell took

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courage and went to bed quite happily, notwithstanding the fact that Eliza, by puffing out her cheeks like a fat pocket-gopher, kept her reminded of the threat in her dismal future, until Mother took away the light.

When Nell opened her eyes the next morning, the first thing she noticed was that Eliza had grown fat, too.

"Oh, 'Liza, your cheek is all fat like mine!" she cried rejoicingly.

"'Tisn't so," said Eliza, jumping up to look in the mirror.

But it was undeniably true, and when they went down to breakfast, every one else saw it, too, and Aline affirmed,

"Mother, I believe the twins are getting the mumps."

This turned out to be the case. So the little girls were straightway put into warm little under-vests to keep them from taking cold, while Baby Edgar was

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promptly quarantined in Mother's room, —a precaution which proved unavailing, just as it had in the case of the measles, since Edgar had a very mild and squally form of both diseases. But from the first discovery of this distressing peculiarity, the twins grew fatter and fatter, and at the same time crosser and more sleepy. Their faces puffed out so that they did not look like themselves at all, as they peered in the glass, but like some other very odd-looking little girls come to visit.

At the very fattest stage Eliza broached the subject of the side-show, at which Aleck merely snorted in a way he had adopted, perhaps because speech was difficult; but he did not embrace the opportunity thus offered to start him in a lucrative business. Nor did Mother encourage the idea of inviting people to come and see them for five or even ten

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cents apiece. So, deprived of this chance of entertainment as well as of revenue, the twins joyfully watched their faces grow thinner and thinner, until they were just themselves again,—little Nell and Eliza Bailey, with the threatened danger of the side-show and the Fat Lady quite averted.

And then for a little while things went on as usual, until one day Aline, who had been gathering together her treasures to pack and go away to teach school, declared that she absolutely must have a picture of the twins to look at when she felt downhearted and homesick.

The question of who could take the twins to town to be photographed threatened at first to be a poser, since both Mother and Aline were far too busy with sewing and packing to spare even an hour, much less a whole day; but the difficulty was pleasantly and satisfactorily

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settled when they found that Father had a day to spare, and would like very much to go. No nicer arrangement could be imagined, for the twins were always good with Father.

So the very next day, dressed in their best clothes, which were so stiffly starched that they stood out about the children like the petals of a gigantic cabbage-rose, as they settled into their seats, the little sisters climbed into the wide-seated phaeton to go with Father to be photographed. They wore their new hats, now a trifle floppy as to the brims; their braids were tied with the most "beyew-tiful" fresh bows; and best and most delightful of all, framing the edge of each smooth, round forehead was a row of charming curls, made in Aline's very best style, to beautify the loose, flying short hairs which had grown to take the place of those that had come out with the measles.

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And so in the beautiful early morning they had started on the wonderful journey to town with Father to have their pictures taken, which did not hurt like having your tooth pulled, nor was it even unpleasant like going to the doctor's, and being told to put out your tongue, and perhaps having it held down with a spoon. But at the picture place you must be very clean and not muss your dress, and you must sit quite still. They had been told this many, many times.

"Good-by, twinnies," called Aline as the wheels began to crunch, crunch on the gravel. "Be sure that you don't spoil your curls."

"Guess we know better'n that," was the twins' injured thought, holding their necks very stiff as they sped rapidly out upon the highway; and then, when they had gone on and on down the wide road, and had passed many houses, and the

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wind had freshened, so great was their fear lest something might happen to those lovely rings of hair that they covered them carefully with their moist little hands.

Throughout all the long journey, shortened to-day by an occasional story from Father, they did not once forget to exercise this care. Yet in spite of these precautions, when they got to the photographer's, they looked in the glass and saw that the beauty of the little curls was all gone, and the once crinkly short hairs stood out so straight and so stringy that even Father, who had never in his life made curls for children, saw that they would never do at all. Of course, there were the curling-irons, and if Aline or Mother had been there, they would have known that the thing to do was to put the curls right back. But Father, who knew 'most everything about business and trains

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and people and church, plainly knew nothing about curls.

"Come, children," he said; and taking up the brush, he brushed their short hairs carefully once, then wet the brush, and brushed them again, leaving their heads as round and smooth as a robin's, and, worse still, shiny as a wild duck's.

The twins gave one look in the glass at this horrible change, and then turned away, their squared lips ready to roar with grief and disappointment. A warning glance from Father stopped them, however; Father did not like crying children. "Swallow that woodchuck! Swallow that woodchuck!" he would say, and if the woodchuck continued to grow and to climb up in their throats, he would say their *names* right out loud. What would have happened if the woodchuck had come 'way up, they never knew; for they had always swallowed him, even when he

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had swelled so large in their throats that there was hardly room for their breaths beside him.

"I tell you what le's do," said Eliza, not daring to let the "chuck" get so much as a start into her choky throat. "By'm by, when the picture is just ready to take, le's put up our fingers wide apart, like this, on each side, and fix our hair all wavy like Mis' Ellis, you know."

Nell knew. She had often studied and admired Mrs. Ellis's "water-waves," but was not so intimately acquainted with them as Eliza, who had often hung over the back of the pew on Sunday to examine them at closer range, much to Aline's embarrassment, and to the joy of Jim Ellis, who thought himself the magnet of attraction.

But circumstances conspired to put the matter entirely out of Eliza's head.

"Look up here," the artist had said,

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when the twins were nicely settled upon a soft, cushiony settee, and he had indicated a small disk fastened upon the top of an easel.

Eliza looked. In her anxiety to see all that could be seen, she thrust out a small, inquiring chin to aid her in her scrutiny. At this movement the artist paused in his adjustment of the camera, and went back to settle Eliza's pose.

"Draw your chin back so," he explained, straightening her head with his two hands.

Eliza, eager to accommodate, drew her chin as far back as the resistance of matter would allow, still keeping her eyes fixed on the disk, drawing her eyebrows well up to keep them out of her line of vision; and looking generally like a diminutive grandmother peering over the top of a pair of invisible spectacles.

But Nell remembered the waves; and

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just as the photographer said, "Get ready now," she executed a whirling motion through her hair with both hands, making her hair look as if a pair of enterprising mice had prepared to establish residences there, one on each side of her brow. After she had finished this original hair-dressing, she raised her small shoulders apprehensively, and looked round,—not with her head, "guess she knew better'n to turn that," but just with her eyes, to see what Father thought of the result. But Father's thoughts were far away with the Board of Missions or his Sunday's sermon, decidedly not upon the immediate problems of curls and photographs; and a few little idiosyncrasies, which would have appealed to Mother or Aline at once, quite escaped his eye.

"Click!" went the camera, and the picture was taken; and the negatives, with all these adjustments and improvements,

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were such that Aline laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks when she saw them.

But Willis looked with disapproving eyes upon this picture of his two small sisters, one with smoothly plastered head, making an apparent effort to view the starry heavens from under uplifted brows; the other, with hair arranged as if by twin cyclones, seemingly trying to examine the exterior of her left ear.

"Of all the caricatures!" he exploded. "The twins are a fairly decent pair of citizens,—once in a while during the new moon, when the wind is in the right quarter; but these might be a pair of infant pirates."

"I'll never have a dreary moment while I possess these," cried Aline delightedly. "I'll hang them over the foot of my bed, where I can see them the minute I wake



JUST AS THE PHOTOGRAPHER SAID, "GET READY NOW."—Page 147.



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in the morning. It will put me in a good humor for all day."

"You might put them in the cellar to keep the rats out," suggested Willis, "or in the corn-field when the crows are bad. But why on earth you should want to show to new acquaintances a picture like that of your young relatives,—one with her eyes rolled up like a duck dying of acute grasshopper-eatibus, and the other looking like a scratchy-headed poodle listening for a mouse—"

Willis stopped here, for Aline touched his arm to show him the twins, listening with round-eyed eagerness for comments and compliments on their first, their wonderful photographs.

"Oh, Willis, they overheard you," she reproached, as the children hurled themselves, an avalanche of grief, into their mother's lap.

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"Oh, Ma-a-a, Ma-a-a!" wept Nell, "am I a scratchy poodle?"

While Eliza, true to her ideals even in this hour of woe, mourned,

"Mu-u-uther, Motho-o-or, am I a dy-ing duck?"

Impelled by the reproof in his mother's eyes, Willis, in all haste, made honorable amends.

"Why, children," he remonstrated, "I did not think you'd mind a little fun! Why, I think your pictures are—" love of truth strove with a desire to bring back the smiles to those sorrow-dimmed faces—"are—remarkable. I consider them — er — quite — a — *e pluribus unum* and—er—*toute ensemble*."

His apology was accepted in the spirit in which it was offered. The clouds broke away. The sun shone again. The twins smiled.

"We didn't know they were tootin'

BEING PHOTOGRAPHED

Sam'l," replied Nell happily, "but we knew they were something pretty nice, didn't we, 'Liza?"

But in spite of Aline's amusement and the delighted satisfaction of the small subjects, Willis's counsel prevailed, and opportunity was sought to have the little girls taken for a new sitting. Father was away this time, so Fred undertook the charge of the twins so far as safety and general conduct were concerned, while Eleanor went along to supervise the curls, the "butterfly" bows, and the toilet generally.

In the second picture the details were somewhat more satisfactory, but to suit some ideas of symmetry on the part of Fred or the artist, tall Eleanor was placed in the center of the picture with a tiny twin on each side.

"Like as if I were a guide-post or a telephone-pole," the "middle" sister ob-

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served, contemplating the result with much disfavor.

But in this picture the bows were nicely arranged, the curls were all one could desire, and they all held their heads well up, and kept their eyes to the front. There was really no fault to be found, and yet—and yet—

“It’s more s-stylish and p-proper, I s-suppose,” said Aleck, forgetting his toothpick in the intensity of his sentiments, “b-but the first one b-beat this all s-silly.”

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTMAS JOYS

A BIG sister away from home meant many new and difficult duties for the small sisters left behind. It meant that they must learn to pick up their own toys and clothes, to help Eleanor make the beds, and that they must wheel Edgar in his cart every day, instead of only once in a while. All of these troublesome tasks they managed to accomplish with the valuable and inspiring assistance of Sambo. Then, too, Aline wanted letters; but these were not attempted, until a return to school renewed their very slight acquaintance with the black art of juggling with pen and ink.

It was near Thanksgiving, just after

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they had finished their first compositions, "Cats and Dogs, our Boon Friends," as the twins expressed it, before they were inspired to begin the long-talked-of letters to Aline. Nearly all one stormy Saturday afternoon they toiled over them, when they were not scratching the thick frost off the window-panes in round patches, through which first with one eye and then with the other, they looked out at the fast-flying snow. Of course this took much time from the letters. They had first to be written with pencil, and then copied on thick, smooth paper with pen and ink, and because of the distraction of the frost the early winter's twilight had grown quite dark before the pencil work was done, and the copying had to be done by lamp-light. Then after all was finished, they proudly invited Father to come and read the letters they had written to Aline.

CHRISTMAS JOYS

"Letters to Aline!" exclaimed Father, apparently as much surprised as if he had not heard, "Please, how do you spell this?" nearly all the afternoon. "Now where are these remarkable epistles?"

Eliza stiffened with horror at this use of a "Bible word" in jest, but even her ready zeal hardly ventured to reprove Father, so they led the way to the dining-room side-table, which had served them for an impromptu desk. Mr. Bailey began with Eliza's letter, which, although ornamented with a round blot at the upper right-hand corner and two inky thumb marks on the lower edge, presented over the rest of its scrawly surface a moderately fair appearance.

"MISS ALINE BAILEY

"DEAR SIR,

"I am taking my pen in hand to write you a Letter and Tell you It is a most pleasant Day. It is Snowing out of the Winder where we lokked in the hole that

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Nell likked on the Winder Pain. I doe not likk holes in Winder Pains. It is nott a nelergent thing to doe Willis sais and is most bad for the tung Nell is writing by this sain Oppertunity and i think is saing many common things I can tell nerely evrything she rites from the words she asks ma i do not like common things i wish to rite what is Stringe an unusuel hoaping this letter will find you the sain

“I remain

“your very obedient servant

“ELIZA BAILEY.”

The salutation and conclusion were copied from one of Aleck's study-books, and Eliza regarded them as the crown-glory of her effort. She waited anxiously to hear what Father would say to them; but beyond straightening his lips very firmly at the close of the letter, he made no sign, and immediately took up Nell's, which was so lavishly ornamented with spots and blotches of ink, that it was not strange that some of them had extended themselves to her own person.

CHRISTMAS JOYS

"DEAR ALINE

**"I am taking my pen in hand to tell you
that Aleck got a new book for His Birth
Day Herberts pollymair has got a new
Coalt Mrs Garvey Has got A girl Baby
our Cow has got A caff and the Hen has
Six little Chickens i hardly ever See our
old Cat any more I think He has got sum
thing the mater of Him i have got to stop
Now so good by**

"from

"yours respectfully

"MISS NELL BAILEY"

**"Are they nice, Papa? May they go?"
cried Nell, hardly able to wait till Father
had finished reading.**

Mr. Bailey smiled quizzically.

**"If you have left enough ink for me to
address them," he said, looking over the
much bespattered pages and children, "I
think they may."**

**And so the letters were sealed and
sent to far-away Aline to bring a funny
little thought of home into her busy days.**

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But the next letters were not nearly so prodigal of ink. Willis saw to that.

"There is no use of being ostentatious, children," he remarked in his grave, comic way, when he had settled them at their next task of writing. "It is a good thing to have plenty of ink, but there is no need of vulgar display. Save a little for the time when the well runs low. And it is not necessary to dot your I's with such zeal as to splash the ink in your own eye, nor cross your T's so furiously as to dig a hole in the paper."

"Willis is always so erdikerlous," giggled Nell, toiling painstakingly under these directions; and although Aline did not laugh so heartily over these new letters, she said, "The twins are certainly improving."

Christmas time soon interrupted further correspondence, for the time being. Then Aline would be home, and kind

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Santa Claus would come, and bring presents for the entire family. The twins had never seen the good old saint as yet, though all the older ones of the family had, and seemed on tiresomely intimate terms with him. They were therefore always in a position to report any lapses of conduct on the part of the smaller children who had not yet had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

In the Bailey household, however, all the burden of gifts did not lie with Santa Claus. He was expected to bring only one beautiful, ardently-desired present to each person,—that thing one openly lacked and wished for many times a day. The rest was done by the members of the family themselves; and, being a large and busy household, continually short of money,—since the stipend of a home missionary, however zealous, is never more than insufficient,—they had adopted a

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practice of giving to each other out of their individual surplus possessions, not with a mean intention to get rid of an unpleasant duty in the cheapest and least troublesome way, but with a really kind and generous impulse to share with the others things which they had found beautiful and useful to themselves.

In this way a letter-case which Aline had found convenient one year, graced Willis's desk the next. A pair of slippers very welcome to Fred last winter, but now pinching a trifle about the toes, was quite acceptable to Aleck's younger feet. And so on through a long list down the entire length of the family. Some very durable or little-used articles, such as vases and pictures, did service Christmas after Christmas; they had passed down the entire length of the family in lineal descent, as one might say, and were now well started on the way back.

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The twins had become initiated early into this method of Christmas giving, and had entered upon the practice with all the enthusiasm which usually attended their adoption of grown-up customs. For days they had been "rounding up" all their small possessions, and the morning before Christmas found the little girls busy selecting from among the array a suitable gift for each one of their many brothers and sisters. Their worldly goods were few, although they themselves did not realize the fact, and would have been the first to repudiate any intimation to this effect.

"Not many toys!" Eliza would have said, repelling the insinuation with scorn, "Guess you never saw inside our doll-house and broorow draw to say that. We just got things and things. We've got dolls, an' a cradle, an' a woolly dog, an' six marbles, an' a box-table, an'—"

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"An' dishes," Nell's eager voice would have taken up the tale, "six pieces of the pink platter that Aleck broke, and lots and lots off the old blue plates, an' we got a broken mug, an' a cracked cream-pitcher, an' oh, the loveliest pieces of blue glass from Aline's old med'cine bottle!"

These and various other articles not included in the foregoing list were spread out on the bed, chair, and floor of their small bedroom, undergoing a careful review.

"I believe we'll give Aline that little glass cup this time," said Eliza, laying this article carefully aside. "She hasn't had that any Christmas since I can remember."

"And we'll give Willis the blue mug," continued Nell, making a selection in her turn. The twins always gave in partnership, though they usually received in-

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dividually. "It'll look real nice up on his shelf, and we can tell him not to drink on the side where the piece is out."

"I wonder if Herbert wouldn't 'joy his glass match-safe again?" queried Eliza, picking up Herbert's last year's gift to herself.

"Sure, an' I believe Fred would be pleased to see his slippers back," said Nell, selecting a pair of number three velveteen slippers, relics of Fred's early boyhood, which had descended to his small sisters by way of Aleck and Eleanor.

The pile of gifts was slowly growing, but the list of available articles was diminishing fast. The twins resumed their anxious inspection.

"How'd Aleck like the marbles? He used to play marbles awful hard when he was younger," suggested Nell.

Eliza shook her head.

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"We need those marbles," she answered thoughtfully. "Le's give him the red pincushion."

And as Nell eagerly assented to this, it left only Eleanor and Baby Edgar to be provided for; and just then Eliza had her brilliant idea.

"We'll give Edgar the muffstache cup," she announced, taking that cherished article down from their tiny corner-shelf. "It's so pretty, blue, with flowers, an' he can drink his milk so nice out of that cute little hole."

With the impulse for riotous fun which often seized him in dealing with the twins, Fred had presented the mustache-cup to Nell on the preceding Christmas. He had at the same time bestowed upon Eliza his cast-off razor, inherited a year or two before from Herbert. Although eagerly received by Eliza, who loved the unusual, this gift was promptly taken in

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charge by Mrs. Bailey as unsafe for a childish plaything. It was still Eliza's, however, though safe in her mother's bureau drawer. "An' the razor will be just the thing for Eleanor, won't it?" she concluded, filled with a generous spirit of self-sacrifice; and there the whole family was handsomely provided for.

"'Course it will," said Nell, nodding her head emphatically, "'zactly the thing. I don't b'lieve El'nor has ever had a razor before in all her whole life."

Then they began making other mysterious transfers, each carefully unobserved of the other; for just before Christmas it was not polite to see what anybody else was putting under the bed or in the closet, even though the tail of the woolly dog might protrude openly, or the Canton flannel elephant's trunk wave quite in plain sight. Christmas etiquette required that you should not look, and

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that you should always be surprised. But since between themselves the Bailey twins always exchanged their last year's gifts from Santa Claus in order to keep them in the firm as long as possible, the only real surprise would have been occasioned by a departure from this custom.

Just as their arrangements had reached this satisfactory stage of completion, they looked at each other with a sudden gasp of dismay.

"We've left out Father and Mother," spoke Eliza with rueful precision.

And sure enough, they had, and their stock of really suitable gifts was quite exhausted. As they stood rolling their eyes about in search of another bright thought, Nell's glance fell upon the very thing for Mother,—the remnant of a once handsome plate-glass hand-mirror formerly owned by Aline. To be sure it had been smashed to pieces by an unlucky fall, but

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the handle was still there with the loop of blue ribbon by which it had hung; and there was enough of the looking-glass part to see all your face, if you took the features separately and individually.

It was certainly the very thing for Mother, and that left only Father, but to find a gift for him was very nearly a poser. It was only after they had looked through the doll-house and "broorow draw" again and again and were just about to give up and ask Mother what they should do, that they found something they were very sure he would like, a beautiful red ribbon they were saving to adorn their best doll. Of course it would make a fine present and must be spared, although it was needed very much in their housekeeping. It was more necessary to complete their list of presents, however, and Jemima could wait for her new sash.

The next thing was wrapping, which

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proved a toilsome afternoon's work; but was completed at last, and all the curious, knobby little parcels, marked with their own scraggy handwriting, were handed to Mother in good time to be put in the stockings along with Santa's gifts. For the twins could not sit up for a glimpse of this kind old person, even though only they and Edgar had never seen him; and it was doubly hard to go to bed early this evening, because Father was coming late on the night-train. It would never do to cry, however, with Santa at the very door, so to speak.

Accordingly the small sisters went off to bed as cheerfully as they were able, and never wakened from their long, dreamless slumbers, until Aline called "Merry Christmas" in the early, snowy morning. Downstairs, warm fires and Christmas stockings awaited them, but no Father.

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Owing to the heavy snow, they were told, last night's train would not be in till this afternoon, and because of the same obstruction, doubtless, Santa Claus had likewise failed them.

"He'll be along some time to-day or to-night," Willis assured them; and, in the interest of their stockings, the twins forgot to be disappointed about Santa, though they certainly missed Father.

"He'll come to-night," said Eliza, as they sat in the living-room, enjoying what one might call their Christmas inheritance, while Mother and Aline got dinner, and the big boys, the only members of the family who could brave the storm, had gone to church.

"If it doesn't snow too much," qualified Nell with her eye at a hole in the frost on the window-pane. "But it's awful snowy now, and o-o-oh, 'Liza!"

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"What?" cried Eliza, jumping up quickly, for Nell's voice was fraught with wonder and amazement.

"There's a great, big, frosty man, 'most like a snow-man, coming in at our front gate," replied Nell in awe-stricken tones.

"Le' me see," demanded Eliza, making a frantic effort to see through Nell's round head, but Nell's eye seemed glued to the aperture that she herself had made.

"He's coming up through the shrubbery," continued Nell, her voice somewhat smothered by her efforts to see better, "'an' he's all big and snowy. Oh, 'Liza, I b'lieve it's Santa Claus."

"Le' me see," repeated Eliza to the back of Nell's head in vain.

And then, although we have it in her own handwriting that it was not a "nel-ergant" thing to do, she worked with her finger nails and her warm, red tongue, and cleared a peep-hole for herself.

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Surely it must be the good saint himself coming up the long drive, very snowy all over his clothes and frosty about his hair, with his breath coming out of his mouth like long puffs of steam.

"See all the things he's carrying. Guess his reindeers couldn't come in the snow," said Eliza, watching eagerly. "Wonder how he'll get upon the roof 'ithout 'em."

"Oh, he's coming right up on the porch!" cried Nell, as a heavy tread sounded without. "Oh, Ma, Ma, it's Santa Claus! May we open the door when he knocks?"

But he never stopped to knock at all. Instead he put a firm hand on the door-knob, the door swung open, and there in the hall, very snowy, and frosty, and cold, and laden down with bundles, was—not Santa at all—but Father!

When Aleck and Eleanor had flown

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with whisk brooms to brush off the snow, and had carried away his damp wraps to be dried, and Father sat, warm and comfortable, beside the glowing fire, he told how he had managed to get a ride on a special train which had come on ahead to clear the track, and how, finding no one in Kirksville to meet him, he had afterwards walked down from the station rather than wait. He had met Santa, too, it appeared, for he had all the special presents which were expected from that kind saint. After the bountiful Christmas dinner these were distributed, and the rest of the afternoon was a time for mirth and rejoicing.

"Such a nice day!" commented Eliza when, tired of playing, they settled down to consider their pleasures. "So many nice presents! And then when we didn't 'spect him, Father came."

"Yes," returned Nell earnestly, "and

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we almost saw Santa Claus. If that had'a' been him, 'stead of Father coming up the drive, we would have seen him, wouldn't we?"

"Yes," agreed Eliza, with an air of great satisfaction, "if that had'a' been him when we thought it was and it wasn't, we would have seen him really and truly."

CHAPTER VIII

FATHER'S SERMON

THE next day was still white and even snowier than the one before; but although the dear delights of Christmas were over, things did not settle into the usual dull routine of shut-in winter days, for Father was to be home for the holidays, just the same as Aline. This was a wonderful treat for all, since Father had so little time with his family. His duties in the home-mission field allowed him only one or two hurried days at home each week, and these days were busy with the preparations of new sermons and arrangements to be off again.

But to-day Father had word from the Bishop, forwarded by Dr. Smith, advising him, because of the dreadful state of

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the weather and roads, to cancel all engagements, at least until after the New Year. So Father had written messages, which Aleck, with joyful heart and long, willing legs, had conveyed to Kirksville to be sent by telegraph or telephone to any place expecting Mr. Bailey's ministrations during the next week; and Father, at home, had spent a long, leisurely forenoon among his books, and an afternoon of advice and discussion with the older boys, whose efforts on the farm supplemented the little missionary stipend, and helped make both ends meet.

But such a small stipend it was, and such a strange Board of Missions which, when bequests were received for the cause of Christ, invested the same at six or seven per cent. in human institutions, instead of putting the whole into that greatest of all investments, "Where the poor have the Gospel preached unto them," whose secur-

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ity is the sure promise of God. Mr. Bailey's children were growing fast, and the Board of Missions was slow, so that the boys,—any one of whom, fired with the impulse of Father's enthusiasm and earnest life, would have gladly entered upon that field of work, where the laborers always are few,—were obliged to be content with a smattering of education at the little Academy taught by Dr. Smith, and to spend their leisure hours and months working the little farm. Perhaps if Father had pushed the matter harder, been more importunate and strenuous in his demands upon the Board, some way might have been found; but being himself a child in faith and a boy in hope and enthusiasm at forty-five, how could he realize that his boys would be men at twenty, and that so the opportunity was passing?

While work and plans kept every one much occupied during the day, the even-

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ing was to be spent socially, and then the twins had their turn. Once Father was comfortably settled in his big parlor chair, the little girls, waiting expectantly at each knee, were hospitably given a perch. Father had such a dear, wide lap; plenty of room for Nell and Eliza on his strong, steady knees and, if circumstances required, a place for Baby Edgar behind in Father's arms, though that was rather cramped and uncomfortable, particularly for Edgar. To-night he stayed only for a moment, just while Mother was making ready to put him in his little crib.

Then the twins had Father quite to themselves, for Willis and Herbert were busy with the latest papers, Fred and Al-eck were cutting a supply of kindling for the morning, and Aline and Eleanor were hurrying away the dishes. Such an evening as this was a treat which seldom

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came to them for any length of time, since Father was home so little. This was the first time he had come for more than a hurried visit since last summer, and that time he had been more busy while at home than when on his missionary rounds. Father could do anything, from giving the boys help and encouragement in their struggles with the farm, to advising and assisting Mother to make the most of their tiny income.

During that vacation a very serious problem had confronted them. Pinch and squeeze the stipend as they would, the twins still lacked shoes. To be sure, Father's stipend was a quarter behind, but who could tell when the uncertain Board would catch up? The little girls certainly could not go to school in shoes the tips of which had split apart in a wide "smile," which let in both water and cold upon the little toes within. To meet



PLENTY OF ROOM FOR NELL AND ELIZA ON HIS STRONG, STEADY
KNEES.—*Page 177.*

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this emergency, Father, who could not be daunted, took the tools with which the boys mended the harness, and procuring a few additional necessities, proceeded to put on new tips made of leather from an old shoe; while the twins stood by, transfixed with wonder and admiration.

One thing that happened they never forgot. When he had finished the second pair, Father took a sharp tool to cut away the projecting pegs. As he cut and dug away, the tool slipped, and cut a hole right through the newly-finished work. The twins gasped in dismay. What would Father say to having so much nice work spoiled? Would he throw it from him in disgust, as Willis sometimes did? Would he turn irritable and say, "Run away, children," like nervous Herbert? Or would he say a bad word, "Darn it!" like reckless Fred, or the milder, "Golly!" of amiable Aleck?

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The suspense was racking. The chisel protruded quite through the leather. What would Father do?

Father looked at the shoe a moment in silence. "Dear me!" he ejaculated mildly, adjusting his glasses.

And then this fine, scholarly clergyman of irreproachable descent and brilliant intellect, who worked for the love of God in the home-mission field on the munificent salary of three hundred dollars a year, seldom paid until long overdue, went patiently to work, and put another new tip on the shabby little shoe, that his small daughter might not have to go to school with dusty, protruding toes.

But on this happy evening no thought of cobbling disturbed dear Father's mind. The stipend had all been paid now, the twins had brand-new shoes, and, for a wonder, there was a tiny surplus in the treasury.

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"Tell us a story, please," demanded the twins, as their seat on Father's knee was rendered more stable by the subtraction of Baby Edgar.

"A story?" repeated Father in a surprised, questioning tone, but with a twinkling eye. "What could I tell you a story about? Suppose I preach you a sermon."

"Not a sermon," begged Nell a little shamefacedly, "'cause I always go to sleep in sermons, and to-night we can stay up till nine o'clock."

"I don't go to sleep in sermons," boasted Eliza, "only—only sometimes. But we want to sit on your lap, Favver, and you couldn't throw your arms round the way they do in sermons 'thout knocking us off."

"Oh, that's the way of it!" responded Father slowly. "Well, I suppose the sermon can wait."

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He was thinking of something which Mother had said to him in regret for his frequent absences:

"They say that shoemakers' children go barefoot. It would really be too bad if a clergyman's family should have to go uninstructed in the teachings of the Church. You must take time to talk to the children this vacation."

"Don't you know any stories?" pleaded Eliza. "Didn't you ever hear one about a bear or a soldier?"

"Yes," said Father, his thoughts returning to the present, "I have heard of both, particularly the latter; for I am a soldier, little daughter, and a leader in an army which is enlisted for a brave, life-long fight." Father's voice was earnest, and he spoke slowly, as if choosing his words.

"Do you mean 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'?" asked Nell, looking up in-

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tently at Father, as he paused for a moment.

Father was very beautiful. His lips and cheeks were so red, and his gray eyes so clear and kind.

"I know about being that kind of a soldier," remarked Eliza, with a sudden assumption of elderly dignity. "It's the kind where they promise to fight manfully always together so long as we both shall live."

"Well, not exactly," corrected Father, biting his lips to keep from laughing at this unusual rendering of the marriage-service; for he was too polite to laugh at even a little girl's mistakes.

Just here Mother came into the room, and the little twins were spilled from Father's lap, as he jumped up to push forward "Grandma's" old easy chair into the circle of the firelight that Mother might have a seat.

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“‘Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,’”

quoted Mother significantly, and at this hint Aleck and Eleanor began to draw the curtains close.

“Not the front ones,” begged Father quickly.

This was the subject of many amiable altercations in the family; for Mother did love to be shut in close and cosy, when the darkness fell, and Father wanted the curtains up so that any poor traveller, belated in the dark, might see the brightness of their fireside.

“Just think what it would mean to some wanderer, lost in the night, to look in upon a scene like this,” urged Father, as Aleck stayed his hand. “Besides, we should not place our candles under a bushel,” and Father smiled brightly, as he helped the little girls back to their places.

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"Our light shines 'way out down the road," observed Aleck, peering through the frosty panes.

"'So shines a good deed in a naughty world,'" murmured Willis, who just at this time ate and drank and breathed Shakespeare, having received a modest set of his own for Christmas.

"Were you ever lost out in the dark and snow, Father?" ventured Eleanor, taking a lowly seat on the cushioned wood-box near his elbow, so as to lose none of the thrilling parts in case of a story.

Father paused awhile in thought, for the waiting faces, full of eagerness and anticipation, plainly demanded a narration and one worth while.

"I never was," he finally answered slowly, "and that spoils a good story, perhaps; but I heard the other day of a most remarkable adventure with wolves,

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which I really think could take its place. It occurred in a foreign country, I believe."

Here Father paused again to think of a properly thrilling beginning. Eleanor drew as near as the edge of the wood-box would allow, and Aleck's eyes glistened with anticipation. Wolves! That was the story for him. With his interest in nature and wild life, any story about animals was delightful. He was as yet undecided whether to be a hunter of big game in the Rocky Mountains or a keeper of the Zoo in Emporia, although he inclined to the former calling, because Christmas had brought him Uncle Hal's present of a gun.

"I cannot make this tale very vivid," began Father at last, "for the man who told it to me was a foreigner, and did not make all parts of it quite clear; but the story runs something like this:

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“There was a poor wood-cutter, who, after finishing his day’s work in a deep forest at some distance from his cottage, started back home at the beginning of the long winter’s twilight. When he had walked quite a way, the sound of wolves was borne to him over the snow, and after stopping several times to listen, he finally decided that although they seemed to be but a small pack, their course lay between him and his own cottage; and that since he was unarmed, it would be best for him to seek the nearest place of safety, hoping that the wolves might pass on without scenting his track, or that some one would soon pass along over this same road, in whose company the homeward journey might be made in safety.

“The nearest refuge, except in the branches of the surrounding forest-trees, was in the loft of a deserted cottage a short distance ahead, towards which he

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now hastened. The cottage itself afforded no safety, as it lacked both doors and windows, but the loft was still in fair condition, and the ladder by which it was reached had lost but a round or two, so that he quickly gained the safe seclusion of the upper floor.

"Once here he felt secure, being sure that the wolves could never climb the ladder, and that it would only be a question of time before some of his neighbors would miss him and come to seek him. While considering this, he was surprised to hear the sound of a faint cry outside the cottage. It in no way resembled that of a wolf, and besides, the yell of the pack was still far distant. This came from near at hand, and seemed to be approaching the lower door.

"Nearer and nearer it came. Then he heard a rustling and a rattling sound below, and there appeared in the doorway

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the form of a great gray wolf, carrying in her mouth a bundle from which the sounds issued. The bundle was well wrapped in a woolen cloth, but it moved as if alive, and the sound that came from it was undoubtedly the cry of a human child."

Father paused here, for the twins had started violently and said, "Oh!" But as each one had instantly put a hand to her mouth to prevent further interruption, the tale was resumed.

"Looking cautiously around for a possible enemy and sniffing the air, in which doubtless the taint of an intruder was evident, the wolf entered, as though familiar with the place; and going to the farthest, darkest corner, she laid the burden down, and made an attempt to cover it with the leaves which the wind had whirled into the floorless interior. The beast then paused, growling faintly, for it must have been

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very evident to her keen senses that something had entered, although there was nothing to be seen now. Showing her teeth to the invisible intruder in an angry, evil grin, she trotted out the way she had come in.

“Now that the bundle was left quiet, the cries gave place to a sorrowful whimper; and the man, looking down from above, was convinced that wrapped in the faded shawl was some one’s beloved baby, and that he had been sent here to rescue it. As quickly as he could, lest the wicked wolf were lurking just outside, he crept to the ladder, and climbed down, tiptoed through the rustling leaves below, gathered the half-smothered little object into his arms, and scurried back into the loft almost in a flash.

“As he regained his place of safety, the woodsman heard the note of the distant pack change and then grow louder.

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Plainly they were coming towards the old house. The little one had stopped whimpering, as if it preferred its new guardian. The man was glad of this, for if the savage beast knew of the whereabouts of her vanished prey, she would sit on guard for hours or even days, leaving them no chance of escape, unless help came from without.

"The wolves were evidently at hand now, for although the yelp of the pack had ceased, their impatient snaps and excited panting could be heard distinctly. In a moment they entered, four in all, three new ones behind, and the large one that had brought the child, leading the way. Without hesitating she went into the dark corner and dug into the nest of leaves, failing, of course, to find her booty. Again and again she dug down into various heaps of leaves, while the waiting pack, seemingly a group of in-

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vited guests, grew more angry and ferocious with every second's delay.

"At last the gray wolf gave up. Abashed and humiliated, with drooping tail and ears, she attempted to explain that in some way or other, which she could not possibly understand, the supper she had promised them had gone. The protests of the disappointed wolves soon grew into a wild argument, which more quickly became a desperate battle raged in the small limits of the old cabin. In a few moments the combatants took to the open, snapping and snarling furiously as they went.

"The sound of the noisy strife had died away in the distance, and night had fallen, when the woodsman heard shouts and guns in the forest near at hand, and peering through the cracks of the loft, he could see lanterns and torches approaching. It was a party of his neighbors out

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searching, not for him, but for a baby stolen from its mother while she was at work just outside her cottage door.

“‘It was stolen by a great gray wolf,’ cried the leader of the party, a stranger to the rescued wood-chopper, ‘and if you have a heart and soul in your body, you will come with us to find it.’

“‘I will come,’ returned the man, stepping forward into the broad circle of light cast by their torches, ‘not to seek, but to restore, since God has sent the child into my hands.’ And he lifted the precious bundle, and started to unloose the wraps, that all might see what he had found.

“When he had drawn the folds aside, and looked down into the baby face, however, he found that he held in his arms, cast into his rescuing hands by a wonderful Providence, none other than his own and only child.”

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"And the wolf didn't hurt it any? Never?" cried the twins with one voice, so much excited that they quite forgot that in a formal company of elders children should be seen, but not heard.

"Never," said Father, looking down at his little girls; and as he looked, they saw in the depths of his gray eyes that he knew, Father knew, though he had never spoken, of that far-away and half-forgotten crime, when they had run away and left little Brother for the wolves or anything else which might happen along while they were negligent.

And as their little heads began to droop sorrowfully before Father's earnest gaze, they saw something else which gave them courage to lift them again. Father understood. He realized that it was not from any spirit of naughtiness that they had left Edgar alone, but from mere childish carelessness, for which they were

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very sorry, and that they would never do it again.

“Did I ever tell you about the time when Professor Crawford was chased up a tree by his own cross cow?” said Father to the boys, relieving the situation with an abrupt change of subject, as he drew the little girls safer with kind, forgiving arms.

And then he told them a comical story of how the old Professor, coming up from a morning dip in the lake, clad in the briefest of bathing suits, met his own cow,—a bovine of crisp and uncertain temper,—who, not recognizing her owner in this chilly-looking person in abbreviated costume, forced him to take refuge in a big willow-tree until rescued by one of the students.

When they had finished laughing at that, he had told them other stories of odd people and queer adventures. Many

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people enjoyed Mr. Bailey's witty and amusing stories, but it was only now and then that he had a spare evening to charm and delight his own family. It was quite like being at a party, the twins thought, especially when Father, tired of doing all the entertaining, proposed that Mother do her part, and led her to the piano, where she sang "Bonnie Doon" and "Kathleen O'Moore" in the sweet contralto voice so seldom used now except in church and to put Baby Edgar to sleep.

"Aline's turn next," suggested Mother, when she had finished; and with Herbert to turn the music, Aline played for a time the gay music that all the children enjoyed.

"It's everybody's turn now," Aline said, a little later, and played the prelude to "Ring the Bell, Watchman," the boys' favorite.

As they all gathered round the piano

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to sing, the twins joined in with a happy little pipe, not caring, so long as they could make a "merry noise," whether they were in tune or not. When the heart is light and young, what matters a half-tone up or down in the key? And as they sang on and on, Father's flute struck in with an accompaniment which lent the crowning glory to the song. Truly this was better than any party.

But soon, all too soon, in the midst of this delight, there came a pause. At a word from Mother, Aleck brought the Bible and Prayer Book, and a reverent silence fell over the room, while Father carefully found his place. Slowly and distinctly, in order that every one might understand and heed, he read the evening's chapter; and then, closing his book and looking thoughtfully around the circle of intent faces, he preached his little sermon.

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“Be ye kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love,” began Father, and although he did not “holler and hit the pulpit,” as Eliza had expressed it, his quiet voice spoke truths which his children never forgot.

He told them that while God required us to love one another, He had made it easier for every one by placing them in little groups or families where this duty could first be exercised. That this love of home and family was a paramount duty is shown where it says, “If ye love not your brother, whom ye have seen, how then can ye love God, whom ye have not seen?” It was by this exercise of brotherly and sisterly love and of the kindly courtesies of home that individuals were fitted for contact with the wider world of men and society at large.

And even when home was left behind, affairs and duties of the world taken up,

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and newer ties acquired, the ties of near kinship were still binding. Children of one earthly father, by the command of our Heavenly One, owed to each other a life-long allegiance; for it is written: "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

And then Father had prayed, even more earnestly than he had spoken, for love and unity in his little flock, and that they might be kept safe and pure through all the temptations of this naughty world. The short service closed with the Twenty-third Psalm, sung without accompaniment, since they all knew it so well; and the baritone and tenor of the boys, the sweet treble of Mother and the girls, and Father's mellow bass, blended sweetly as they sang:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley

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of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me."

By this time it was nine o'clock, the time to go to bed. The little girls went cheerfully, although it was hard to leave the bright circle, which had not yet begun to disband, but a fresh resolve to strive for the unity and happiness of the dear home had come to them, as well as to their elders. So they said their good-nights cheerfully, and climbed the long stair to the little white room without a grumble, even though it was Eleanor and not Mother who came with them.

Soon after this Fred and Aleck took a last look at the supply of wood for the morning; Herbert began to cover the fires, and Willis to light the small hand-lamps for the different rooms. It was a long proceeding to get so large a family off to bed, but at last they all said good-night, and separated; and soon after-

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wards one by one the lights went out, and silence settled over the household.

Then in the quiet darkness the snow laid a soft, fresh coat upon the roof beneath which they slept quietly and peacefully; and dreamed happily.

In the early morning they waked to look again upon a world all white and cold without, all warm and jovial within; to spend again the busy days, the pleasant evenings, and the peaceful nights, for six successive days; and then, the holidays over, Father went back to his ministrations, and Aline to school, both by the same train.

It was still snowy, but the paths were broken, so the twins had the delight of trudging with Aleck down the long drive to hold open the high, swinging gate, while the spirited colts driven by Fred dashed through with the comfortable double-sleigh.

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“Good-by,” called Father, touching his hat to his little girls, just as if they were grown-up ladies.

“Good-by! Good-by!” called the twins, waving their hands, a twinkle of red mittens, until the sleigh with its jingling bells had quite disappeared from sight and hearing beyond the big oaks far down at the turn in the road.

“Father will come again in a week,” said Aleck, barring the big gate, and so he did, and again in a week after that; but the old hurried days and the busy evenings came once more and the week when Father had time for long talks, for pleasant stories, and for earnest sermons for his own children grew to be only a memory. Yet this was a happy, blessed memory, and in the years to come when Father slept his last long sleep, it was a strong power to aid Mother’s gentle hand in guiding her flock in the paths wherein they should walk.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW SISTER

NOW shortly after the holidays a very strange thing happened.

One morning Mother called Eliza into her room and told her that very soon Herbert would be married, and then they would have Miss Bessie James for a new sister. But Eliza was to promise not to tell any one or even speak a word about it, for Herbert did not like to have his affairs talked about, as that made him very uncomfortable.

Eliza was quite willing to promise this. The joy and importance of having a secret all her very own was quite enough for her, without the common satisfaction of speech, and all the rest of the day she went about with her mouth puckered very

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tight to show how safe, how very safe, the wonderful secret was in her keeping. She was so taken up with thus locking her lips over her own care of the secret that she did not notice that Nell's lips were puckered, too, until the next morning. Then Eliza, in trying to get Edgar's buggy up on the veranda, said in her prim grown-up way,

"I need as-sist-ance."

And Nell laughed, and replied,

"I thought you were going to say you needed a sister," and then they had looked at each other, and each saw that the other knew, though they had neither told a word.

After all it was more fun to share a secret, even though you must not talk about it; and the twins had many jolly laughs over just saying, "Sister, sister," in a tiny little sing-song voice.

But Fred was dreadful. It was clear

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enough that he had not promised anything. He spoke of the secret right out loud, and even dared to laugh before Herbert,—Herbert, who had such sensitive feelings, and towards whom the twins preserved a tender and pitying mien, as though he were some frail and beloved one condemned to an early martyrdom. But try as they would, they could not check Fred. Eliza might hem until her throat was quite sore, and Nell might shake her disapproving head until she was dizzy. It did no good.

“Hello, Herb!” Fred would say. “How’s the pulse to-day? Cheer up, old man! ’Twill all be over soon,” and so on every day in the most, inconsiderate, not to say, immodest manner.

And Herbert was so patient. If it had been possible to imagine it of so sensitive a soul, the twins might have said he liked it. But the small sisters heard in

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disapproving silence. Didn't they know that when a person is going to be married, he feels bad enough as it is, and you must not tease or gossip, or in any way refer to his unpleasant position? And they did not, though once Eliza came very near it.

"Bear up old man, only ten days more!" Fred said one morning just after breakfast.

Something in the phrase,—its referring to an approaching event within a short limit of time, and its mystery of preparation,—made Eliza think of Thanksgiving, with its victim in solitary preparation for a great event in which it was to be the sole sacrifice.

"Oh, Fred!" she asked in apprehensive tones, "will they give him plenty to eat?"

"Don't know," returned Fred, slapping his thigh with a great roar of mirth at this unconscious jest, "you can't 'most

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always tell. Herb has to take his chances on that."

This was the nearest the twins came to telling; and you really could not say that Eliza actually did mention the forbidden subject, although, of course, it was perilously close.

And because they had been so very careful, another delightful thing came to pass. One afternoon, after a long discussion with Willis, Mrs. Bailey had called the little twins to come and be wrapped up. She told them that they were to go to Kirksville with Willis in the buggy to buy a wedding present for Herbert.

"The wedding will be very soon now," said Mother, tying the little tippets under the round chins, "and of course Herbert wants his little sisters to see him married, and surely every little guest would want to bring a wedding present."

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Of course they wanted to get Herbert a present. Dear, kind Herbert, who had been so patient with Fred's teasing, and who was so good as to invite them to his wedding! On such a wonderful errand it was not strange that the bright, cold day looked very beautiful to the warmly wrapped little sisters, and that every bit of the ride over the crunching ice and purring snow was a joy and a delight.

At last they reached town, and Willis, hurried with many errands, took them into kind Mr. Buckner's general store, and announced their errand.

"Something very nice for a present," repeated Mr. Buckner, reflectively. "About what style and what price?"

"It doesn't make any difference," said Willis, briskly. "Let them buy what they want, and put it in our bill, and don't advise or influence them. It must be absolutely their own choice," and Wil-

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lis hurried out to see about other things, and left the twins and Mr. Buckner, all three somewhat puzzled and embarrassed, alone together.

“How would a nice, easy rocking-chair do?” suggested the store-keeper, indicating some brilliantly varnished rockers suspended from the ceiling.

The twins looked disapprovingly. They were quite too brown and not shiny enough. They knew how a present should look. It should have a beautiful color, and should glitter like a glass ball on a Christmas tree; but it should be useful, quite useful.

“How about one of these pretty rugs?” asked Mr. Buckner, making a second effort, seeing that his first brought no response.

The twins considered the display of rugs hung on a clothes-line across the front of the store. Here were some beau-

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tiful, even gorgeous colors, and rugs were certainly useful. One representing a pair of elephantine kittens sporting with a mountainous ball appealed to them strongly, but the shininess which belonged to a "truly" present was lacking, and the twins moved on.

"How about a picture, a real handsome framed picture?" urged Mr. Buckner, and again the would-be purchasers paused in thought.

Here was shininess, and color, too, in spots. They were looking admiringly at a gorgeous robin picking at a particularly large and luscious cherry, when at the other side of the store, beckoning at them from a high shelf, they saw *The Present*.

From the moment they first set eyes on it, they neither hesitated nor doubted. The Present was bright, and it was beautiful, their own eyes told them that; and even dissenting Mr. Buckner could not

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deny that it was useful. So when they were set down on the counter,—fortunately there was a pair of them, a present from each twin,—and were found on close inspection to be even more enthralling than when viewed from beneath the high shelf, the small girls made their irrevocable decision.

Mr. Buckner might tempt them with things more common and nearer at hand; but the twins were determined to have their present, at first mildly, afterwards stubbornly, and finally when they showed signs of becoming tearfully insistent, Mr. Buckner made hasty preparations to wrap up the objects of their unalterable choice.

Just then Willis returned.

“Bought your present, twinnies?” he asked, and the triumphant shoppers nodded their heads with their lips firmly closed, rolling their eyeballs about with an effect of the most mysterious secrecy.

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"Something in this line, I suppose," remarked Willis, addressing Mr. Buckner, his eyes roving over the large display of china and glass ware.

"Yes, sir," answered the store keeper in somewhat muffled tones, as he carefully wrapped and re-wrapped the precious parcel, "something in fine china. They took their own choice, just as you said."

"But you sha'n't see it till Ma does," said Eliza, closing her mouth until she appeared to have no lips at all; and Nell, shaking her head till her face looked a mere blur, re-echoed the sentiment:

"Nobuddy shall see it till Ma does."

So Willis went out for the horses, and then Mr. Buckner brought out the present, disguised by wrappers until it looked like a huge ball; and, placing it carefully under the seat, he jumped the little girls into the buggy, one on each side of Willis, where they exchanged delighted punches

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across his patient back, and overflowed with little ecstatic giggles on all the swift way homeward.

Willis was not considered in the least bit curious; but notwithstanding the very thick pair of mittens he had worn on the drive, it seemed impossible for him to get his hands satisfactorily warm, until Mother's careful fingers had undone string after string and wrapping after wrapping, down to the very heart of the precious bundle.

"There!" declared the twins. "Aren't they lovely! We choosed 'em ourselves."

Divested of its wrappings, glowing with pink, and glittering with gold, stood the present which the little sisters had selected to aid their brother in launching his untried bark upon the troublous sea of matrimony,—a pair of pink and gold shaving-mugs, extra large size.

"See how shiny!" commented Nell, put-

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ting a fat hand in the cunning little shelf of her contribution.

"It's so useful," added Eliza, investigating the dear little cave in hers.

"Willis!" said Mrs. Bailey in reproachful tones; but Willis gave a stare of uncomprehending innocence.

"What's wrong, Mother?" he argued. "They're quite unique. No fear of further duplicates of these gifts. Just let the twinnies label them in their own handwriting and language, and they will be the center of the evening's attraction."

So when Willis had time he found a large, smooth white card, and, putting in his own holder a new pen which scratched and spluttered in a most delightful way, he started the little sisters to writing the "label" he desired. For a few moments the children worked busily, taking turns with each word so that it might be their joint work.

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"Do you spell brother with a 'u' or an 'e'?" inquired Eliza anxiously, beginning her second turn.

After informing them that there was a popular prejudice in favor of "o," Willis withdrew his assistance and the twins toiled on perspiring alone.

"There, I hope that suits 'em," said Nell, straightening herself with a heavy sigh, when the final word was laborously penned.

And Willis, coming over to look, read as follows:

To our brother
Herbert and Bessie
from
yours very respectfully
The Twins

And with this setting, placed on a large

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table beneath the hanging lamp, the twins' unusual tokens of affection certainly attracted much attention.

The great event, which all these lesser ones had but faintly foreshadowed, came at last. It was to be in the evening, of course, as the days at this time of the year were so short that they really gave time for nothing; and Aline drove out for the occasion with Aunt Cynthia, Uncle Hal, and the cousins.

The little chapel was filled, to its utmost capacity, and to make all the space possible, the sliding doors into the Sunday-school rooms were pushed back to their farthest limit. In this part of the building the seats were smaller, and as far as possible, these seats were given to children; and here, far away from the older members of their family, some careless usher, not knowing the possibilities of such a combination, placed the Bailey

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twins, alone and together. This arrangement was very pleasing to the small sisters. It gave them a delightful sense of maturity and freedom to sit so far from Aline's warning eye or Eleanor's admonishing elbow. They sat up quite straight in their delight, and stretched their necks as far as they would go.

"I wonder why Herbert has it so dark in here," observed Nell presently in a gusty whisper, which was audible for a radius of at least six pews, giving the impression that among the other duties and responsibilities of the harassed bridegroom, the work of janitor pressed heavily.

"I guess he didn't want anybody to see him very plain," returned Eliza in the same tone. "Getting married is a risky thing, Fred told him, and I guess Herbert is beginning to feel pretty bad over it."

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Here the music began, and the twins were silent for a time, watching the bridal party enter and take their places. Then the minister began to read the service, and the profound silence extended to the uttermost corners of the church.

"I, Elizabeth Caroline, take thee, Herbert," said the minister's prompting voice.

"'Lizabeth Caroline? Who's Herbert marrying *now*?" rose Eliza's protesting stage-whisper in her distant corner, with an inflection which implied that she was not surprised at the mere fact of his marrying, that being a common occurrence, but only that he had now secured a new accomplice. "I thought he was going to get married with Miss Bessie."

"Perhaps when he came to tell her about it, she found she had to do house-cleaning or spring sewing, and couldn't,"

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returned Nell wisely. "I don't know any 'Lizbeth Caroline."

"Neither do I," said Eliza, rolling up her eyes to assist her mind in the search for this strange name among the list of her acquaintances. "I'm so sorry for Herbert. It would be so much nicer for him to get married with somebody he was 'quainted with, than just a stranger."

"With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow," continued the minister, prompting Herbert's low tones.

"That means Polly and Jim," explained one of the small commentators in the farther end of the church, "and the saddle an' bridle an' harness an' plow an'—"

"I know," broke in Nell's excited whisper, "Fred said so. And it means the broorow up in the boys' room, that's Her-

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bert's, an' the rocker with the broken arm,
an'—"

Just what further embarrassing details of Herbert's dowry might have been divulged for the benefit of a small and delighted audience, will never be known; for just at this point Eleanor, pink to the tips of her ears, rose from her seat six pews ahead, and stealing noiselessly back took forcible possession of a seat between the voluble twins.

Soon afterwards the "marrying" was over. The music swelled to a beautiful triumphant march, and the wedding-party came down the aisle, Herbert looking pale, but very happy; and it was Miss Bessie he had married, after all. Dr. Smith never could remember names. He was always calling Nell, Eliza, and Eliza, Nell.

And after Herbert and Miss Bessie came Fred and the nice girl who had

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helped them when the surrey tipped over, and then came a great many other people, among them Father and Mother. And then they all went out and got into the surrey, and went to Miss Bessie's house,—only “everybody called her Mis' Bailey, now, and laughed 'cause that was Mother's name,—and there they had sandwiches an' ice-cream, an' cake an' ice-cream, an' more cake an' ice-cream,” until Mother said:

“That's enough, children; you'll be sick if you take any more,” and then they all went home.

That is, all but Herbert, for he had gone off with some one who was not even a member of his family, but who was more to him than all his relations, and who, now that he had claimed her before the world, seemed a part of his very being. But the twins did not understand this, and only felt it a sad thing that one of them, even

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though it was Herbert, the oldest and best able to stand alone, had gone out from under the safe shelter of Father's roof.

CHAPTER X

MORE WEDDING BELLS

AFTER the great halt in the onward procession of events caused by that momentous affair, the wedding, the days sped on as before, busier and fuller than ever; since now there was Herbert's cottage down below the hill to be visited at least once a week. There, crowned with a new dignity, surrounded by bright and beautiful adornments, among which the twins' wonderful gift, explained by its accompanying placard, occupied a very conspicuous place, Sister Bessie was keeping a kind of magnified doll-house, in which the twins felt an eager and sympathetic interest.

But when in the midst of other miracles which she daily performed with the

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help of her smooth new kettles and beautiful, shiny pans, Sister Bessie took a bag of scraps which Mother sent down to her, old mementoes of various calico dresses long since passed away, and transformed them into a wonderful kaleidoscope of colored patchwork,—basket, star, and sunburst patterns,—the admiration of the twins transcended all bounds. Then this dear new sister, who had ideas of her own concerning waste of time and the training of children, had offered to teach them this marvelous art of cutting cloth into strange, scrappy little shapes and uniting them by some mysterious process into a new and beautiful whole.

Most certainly they wished to learn, and since Bessie told them that when completed, as it would be in time, such a work of art might constitute a present for some member of their family, they entered upon the practice of this new craft

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with fevered enthusiasm. Eagerly they shed their lifeblood in tiny spots of gore dotted here and there over the crowded little patches in places where the uncertain fabric gave too readily, allowing the passage of the sharp needle with unexpected suddenness; and patiently they flayed themselves in infinitesimal portions, as they sewed up small scraps of their forefingers into the very substance of their work. But they persevered, under Sister Bessie's encouragement; and they progressed, although the road to final success was sometimes hard and sorrowful.

For spring time was coming now, first with its pussy willows nodding over the bank of the pebbly stream, now released from its thrall of ice, then with the long, drooping catkins heavy with honey-like perfume, all of which had to be harvested in greater or less profusion to adorn pitchers, jars, bottles,—anything which

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Mother could spare. Who could turn aside from these dear enticements for even the most beautiful of patches, even though wise Sister Bessie had kept the most gorgeous pinks and brilliant blues for just this emergency? And then the wild flowers began shyly to don their new spring costumes, and come forth, one by one; the hepatica, sweet in her delicate new lavender lawn; the blue bells, brilliant in soft pink and blue; the spring beauties in lovely pink-sprigged light calicoes; and then, the "boys and girls" in their dear, cunning little white trousers; each a separate and pressing invitation to wander forth by wood and stream; but even yet, the patches made a real, though somewhat uncertain progress.

And then summer came, and with it, Aline,—Aline, the same kind sister, yet somehow strange and different. With the passage of days this strangeness dis-

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appeared, but the difference remained, showing how a bad practice, once indulged in, may in time become a fixed and unalterable habit. Aline, who last summer had gone riding with a strange person and left her little sisters behind in spite of their outcries and protests, now did it habitually and as a matter of course, each time followed by beseeching wails to "wait and le' me come, too."

Mr. Rogers was at the bottom of it all. Every few days he appeared with a new and specious excuse for taking Aline away,—a school meeting in Fielding, a drill in View Point, or a call from Aunt Cynthia, who seemed to be in league against the twins. And each time the small, trusting sisters were hoodwinked.

"I believe I left a parcel on the bench in the summer-house," Mr. Rogers would say. "You may have it, if you will run out after it;" and while there investigat-

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ing what proved to be a box of delicious cracker-jack, they heard the familiar rattle of wheels, and Aline was gone beyond the reach of their wildest shriek.

Or Aline would remember something she wanted from upstairs, something from the upper bureau drawer, where they were seldom allowed to look, and while there—again the wheels and the grief-stricken cries.

“Wonder Aline wouldn’t chloroform those youngsters!” remarked Fred one Sunday afternoon, as he and Willis watched the light buggy disappearing down the road, while from the room across the hall came in despairing wails:

“Oh, Ma-a-a! Make Aline wait for us. Oh, Ma-a, mayn’t we go, too?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” retorted Willis, perversely.

Willis was apt to be perverse in these days. Bound by environment and lack

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of opportunity to the uncongenial duties of the farm, he had found in his sister his chief solace and his inspiration to study independently for a career in the great world without; and in these new developments he saw a threat, a possibility, of losing Aline, on whom he depended for comradeship and encouragement. No wonder he half sympathized with the twins in their revolt against this new order of things, and felt that if it would do any good, he, too, would cry aloud:

"Oh, Mother, must she? Shall she? Oh, Mother, don't let her!"

But Mr. Rogers had come and come again, and one day Mother told the little sisters that he was coming there to see Aline, and had asked Father to be allowed to marry her.

The scorn of the twins was withering to behold.

"Him marry!" sneered Eliza, evidently

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in league with the new movement to shut out all ineligible from among matrimonial candidates. "He can't get married. He's—he's—got whiskers."

"Course not, with whiskers," chimed in Nell, repeating the same unanswerable argument, and clinching it with another all her own. "'Sides, we don't want him."

And so the twins ranged themselves in unalterable opposition to this candidate for Aline's hand, until Mr. Rogers, seeing that their unfriendly attitude really pained Aline, attempted with the confidence of one who had won many successes, to plead his own cause. Under the gaze of those round hazel eyes, which seemed to bore into his very soul, he must inevitably have faltered or broken down, had there been any stain on his escutcheon, any flaw in his good intentions;

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but there was none, so he stated his case handsomely and finished by saying,

“So now you must be good girls, and give me Aline, and take me for your own big brother.”

“We can’t spare Aline,” returned Nell earnestly, “she’s our only big sister, and we just must have her.”

“And we have lots of brothers already, as many as we can keep,” broke in Eliza coldly. “Fred and Aleck’s room is just full, and Herbert took his bed with him.”

“And we need Aline,” continued Nell, returning to the charge, for Mr. Rogers showed no signs of surrender or defeat.

“So do I need Aline, little twinnies,” replied Mr. Rogers; and in his deep voice was a note of earnestness which thrilled their contrary little hearts in spite of themselves, “need her so much that all my successes will count for naught, all my

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ambition fade away, my work come to nothingness, and my plans for the future crumble and fall, unless I have her by my side to help and inspire me onward."

"Well, if you need her all that, I guess we might spare her a little," hesitated Nell, awed by the wide-spread desolation threatened by their small opposition, "but you'll have to bring her back in time for fall sewing."

And Eliza, knowing that with Nell's surrender she, too, must yield, did so, adding shrewdly:

"I guess you must think Aline's pretty smart, if just not having her'll make all that trouble."

Now that this opposition was removed, preparations for the wedding, already begun, sped forward at a rapid rate. Miss Ramsay and Aline sewed early and late. Neighbors and friends ran in with dainty bits of needlework, and Aunt Cynthia

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drove out frequently to display bargains which she had secured for Aline's benefit.

And last and best of all, though preserved as a profound secret, which all might read who ran, unless they were somnambulists, the twins were incited by Sister Bessie to a tremendous burst of speed to finish the wonderful piece of patchwork for a wedding present. Then indeed did the gore spatter over the little patches, not from clumsiness, for the twins were getting to be fairly clever little seamstresses, but from the speed of their endeavors. And for the same reason, they sewed their little thumbs and fingers into the material so many times that their small digits became quite sore. But the beautiful piece of work grew nearer and nearer completion, till finally it was quite done, and Sister Bessie sewed the blocks together on her sewing-machine, and then

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turned the gorgeous whole over to Mrs. Turner to be quilted in time for the wedding, now just ten days off.

That day the twins went home from Herbert's so full of delight it seemed they could not hold another drop, and then that very night Mother told them of a new joy which nearly lent wings to their happy hearts. Aline had chosen them to be her bridesmaids. Dear, kind Aline had chosen them! Not Eleanor, who was always so quiet and proper and kept her clothes clean; nor Aleck, who had grown so tall and handsome all at once, nor Fred, who had a teenty-weenty mustache now; nor Willis, who was her best friend and comrade; not one of these had she chosen, but just the little twins, to be her bridesmaids! And they were to have white dresses and white shoes and stockings, and should carry little baskets filled with white flowers. Kind Aline, to think

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of this! How glad they were they had not refused to let her get married! And forgetting the soreness of their little roughened fingers, the small sisters fell asleep, quite dazzled with the joys to come.

And then the time sped on so fast that the hours fairly tripped over each other, but flew on all the same, until the morning of the great day for which all these preparations were in progress, arrived at last.

Then came for the twins a jumble of excitement and events, of which only a few pictures stood out for memory in the days to come. They remembered Aline, radiant in her soft white dress and shimmering veil, with Mr. Rogers, pale with earnestness and joy, standing before the dear old chancel where Father himself, with Dr. Smith to help, performed the marriage ceremony. And Mother, pale,

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too, and almost tearful, stood forward with Willis to give the bride away. And in the midst of all this stood the little twins, a confused memory, laden with flowers, which they threw in the pathway of the bride and groom, as they preceded them.

For once the twins performed their part without one single blunder, and to the lovely Mendelssohn March they had all passed out of the shadows of the old chapel into the glowing light of a glorious afternoon sun, and were driven swiftly home to the little reception held under the beautiful oaks in the yard before Aline's home.

Every one was there and every one was happy,—from Baby Edgar who, toddling on the broad gauge of infant locomotion, “goo-gooed” his satisfaction in the company, the ice-cream, and the unusualness of things in general, to old Dr. Smith,



FOR ONCE THE TWINS PERFORMED THEIR PART WITHOUT ONE
SINGLE BLUNDER.—Page 236.

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who, grasping the bridegroom's hand in earnest congratulation, said,

"Of course your experience will bear me out, my dear sir, in saying that Love, being the white heat fusion of the Intellect, Sensibility, and Will—"

"Of course, of course," answered Mr. Rogers, grasping the old student's hand and the situation at the same time, "and my wife quite agrees with you; and Dr. Smith, if you will take a seat at this first table, the young ladies will serve you to refreshments right away."

And the good old doctor, who had planned a delightful discussion of the deep truths of Mental Science with the scholarly groom, quite unexpectedly found himself discussing, with no less pleasure, salad and ice-cream with a bevy of charming young ladies.

Even Willis, who had looked forward to the event with dread, wore a beaming

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face, for Mr. Rogers in the midst of his own happiness, had a word of encouragement for him.

"Cheer up, Brother!" he cried with a hearty hand-clasp. "Aline's home is yours, remember, and when we come back, it's Emporia and newspaper-work for you—if you like."

Like! When it was of that he had dreamed! Willis could only return the grip with a smile eloquent of thanks, for he could not trust himself to speak.

But the merriest and happiest hours must end, and just as the sun was sinking, Aline and Mr. Rogers were driven away, as they had often driven before, down the long drive and out the wide front gate. They were not pursued this time by wails and protests of, "Mother, must she! Le' me go, too." For the twins had given their full and free con-

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sent, and would not now go back on their word, though their hearts were very full.

"I just don't know what we're going to do 'thout Aline," sighed Nell to Willis, as the carriage turned into the highway.

"Just play she's gone away to teach," said Willis with unexpected good cheer—Willis had been so contrary and uncertain of late. "And when vacation time comes, you can go and see her."

The twins drew a long breath, beginning to grasp the advantages of these new conditions. This, then, was what marriage meant,—new brothers and new sisters and then new homes to visit.

Its wide possibilities were still undergoing mental digestion at bedtime, when Mother had taken off their dainty dresses, and tucked them safely in their little bed.

"An' such a lot more brothers and sis-

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ters to come," mused Eliza. "There's Willis an' Fred, an' bimeby, Aleck an' Eleanor."

"An' after that there'll be you an' me, an' then Edgar," went on Nell, taking a more extended flight into the distant future. "We've all got to find somebody to get married with, to get a brother an' sister for the rest of us."

"I just don't b'lieve I'll get married," announced Eliza, stirred by a sudden thought. "I'll be like Miss Cates. She said to-day she felt a call to teach and not get married."

"Well," returned Nell with great decision, "I'm going to get married like Bessie, and have a house an' tin pans an' chickens an' a calf, an' if anybody wants to call me to do any different, they've got to holler mighty loud."

Eliza's only reply to this was a long breath, for she was asleep; and Nell, with

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eyes fixed on a friendly star which looked intently through the window, soon followed her example. The star moved on and upward, and others followed it across the broad panes, and the twins still slept; while out in the spangled night, hurrying onward through the darkness, Sister Aline was going to a new life, new joys, new work, and new happiness.

THE END



Judith's Garden

By MARY E. STONE BASSETT

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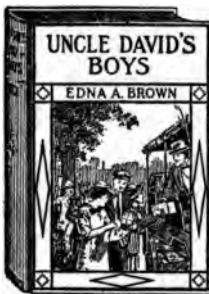
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